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1. Fiction, English

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A COMEDY OF MAMMON



A COMEDY *of* MAMMON

By INA GARVEY

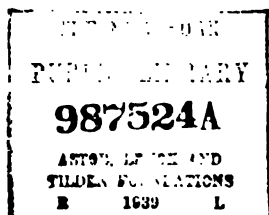
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A COMEDY OF MAMMON

I

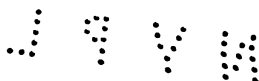
HARD FACT AND SOFT ROMANCE

Amy Robinson's Diary.

Spring of 1906. — Another day gone; another dreary day. I took my junior English classes all the morning — dictation, grammar, history — till one o'clock. The usual Wednesday dinner at half-past one — roast mutton not done enough, potatoes done to pulp, and hard, bouncing rice-pudding. Afternoon, I took two of the junior harmony classes, and then overlooked the *ensemble* playing of Miss Pickering's younger pupils. *One*, two, three, four; *one*, two, three, four — my very dreams are full of the dreadful counting, at times. I suppose I *ought* not to find the

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life of a junior school teacher so unedurable, the monotony, the drudgery, the uncongenial companionship of the teachers, the endless procession of uninteresting girls, for I have known nothing else, and my poor father knew nothing else. Ah, but my mother knew of very different things! Though she died before I can remember, and my father, while he lived, never cared to talk about the past, I have pieced the story together — how she fell in love with beautiful hazel eyes, and a pale handsome face, and curling auburn hair, and so eloped with a poor music-master, and was cut off for ever and ever from her rich, proud relations. Had she married as her family wished, I should have had all the things I have to do without now, lovely clothes, a fine house, nice meals (it's horrible for a girl to own that she likes nice food, of course, but it's true for all that!), horses to ride, motors, travel, balls — "all this world and all the glory of it." I should never have known anything then of the little, dreary, sordid world of "Sea View House, Clifgate. High-class School for



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Girls. Pupils prepared for the Examinations of the College of Preceptors, and the Oxford and Cambridge Local. Personal Supervision. Special Attention given to Delicate and Backward Girls." No, I should never have known anything of this little world, where the teachers spy upon the boarders and upon each other, and where the fortunate individual who is asked to have tea with the Head in her own sitting-room is regarded as having not much left to wish for on earth. I should have known nothing of all this. But there is another side to the matter. Had my mother married as her family wished, and not pleased herself, I should very likely have been plain and thick-set, with a muddy complexion, and small pale eyes. And then *he* would never have looked at me.

There are *some* compensations in my lot, no doubt. My father left me nothing but his face, but that was much. When I look in the glass I see the large, deeply-set hazel eyes, the small shapely lips, the clear, pale skin, and the wealth of curling auburn hair, for which my mother threw away

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her wealthy home and became a stranger to her kin.

Miss Pickering asked me to take a walk with her after tea. She expected me to be duly grateful for the honour — a mere junior teacher asked to walk with one who combines the posts of resident music-mistress and English and Latin teacher, who has the degree of B. A. and also the certificate of the R. A. M.

We took the walk along East Cliff. The evening was warm for April and beautifully fine. Miss Pickering talked school the whole way. She told me of her hard work in past years, when she was preparing for her degree, and of her own and her sister's joy when she passed; of her strenuous days at the R. A. M., her hours of practice, her triumph when, playing for her diploma, she injured her hand over the octave-glissade in Weber's *Concert-stück*, and yet went on in quite unimpaired style to the end, when the Examiners complimented her not only on her "brilliant finger," but on her pluck as well.

Her face flushed as she recalled these

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things, almost as it might over the remembrance of a love-affair.

"Sea View House is, of course, not quite up to my mark," she said presently. "Things are not *strenuous* enough there, and the girls are sent more for their health than to do credit to themselves and their teachers. But I was advised to live by the sea for a time, so it's really a kind of holiday for me." (A holiday! and she's teaching English and Latin, and giving music lessons pretty well all day!)

"And now, Miss Robinson," she went on, "what do you say to taking some of the junior harmony classes? It would improve your position among the teachers, and I think you're competent to take them since you've come to me to be coached. It would leave me more time to devote to the advanced ones who are doing counterpoint and art of fugue. You're quite competent now to take the young ones who are at the Interval Table, and I think you might take the next class, who have got up to the Dominant Seventh and its Inversions."

We had reached the Headland now,



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and stood to look at the view. Oh, the sea and sky were so divine in the light of the spring evening! And oh, to be young and beautiful, and supposed to have one's thoughts full of nothing but classes and school drudgery!

"The air is deliciously fresh and bracing to-night," said Miss Pickering, while my whole soul was bathing in the evening splendour. "Gives one quite an appetite doesn't it? I really think I shall have *two* eggs with my supper when I get back."

As I made no answer she looked at me and seeing something in my face I supposed, "I'm very much afraid you're romantic, Miss Robinson, and that *ne* does in a teacher. Such a shocking ample to the girls!"

"Why do you think me romantic, Miss Pickering?" I asked. "I was only thinking it was a fine evening."

"Oh, yes, my dear Miss Robinson, I doubt. But there's *one* way of thinking it's a fine evening, and there's *another* and yours was the *other* way. Can't you not go on scolding me," as we t

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go back, and she took my arm. "It's very natural, I dare say. Most girls are like that, though I never was. When girls like you say it's a fine evening, and look interesting and sentimental, one knows they're mixing up some *young man* with the fine evening, as I dare say you were mixing up Mr. Percy Simpkins with it."

"Mr. Percy Simpkins!" I echoed indignantly. I did not add any more, but what I meant was, "That little country 'Arry who, on the strength of his sister being a day scholar, comes to the school parties, and has tried to pay me attentions!"

"You do quite right, my dear Miss Robinson, to treat the matter in that spirit; it's proper and maidenly," she said, "and also it's far best not to set your heart on it and dream dreams. All the same, he does seem rather struck with you, and being the son of Simpkins, the auctioneer, it would be a very good match for you. Dear, dear! what frivolous, worldly talk! I'm quite ashamed of myself. And now what do you think about my plan of your taking the junior harmony classes?"

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On the way back, coming down the cliff-path, we passed *him*. I dared not bow to him, of course, with Miss Pickering there. I dared not even *look* at him. I do hope he understood, and did not think I was offended with him, or that I meant to be cruel. The idea of a poor little teacher like me being *cruel* to *him*! But *he* has made me think it possible.

Oh, what would Miss Pickering and the other teachers, and above all, the Head, say if they knew of that afternoon, when my hat blew off on the cliff, and he caught it and brought it to me, and said, laughing, and yet so respectfully, that the wind that day was certainly not the *ill wind* that blows nobody good, for it had blown *him* a great good, just what he wanted, the chance to speak to *me*.

What would they say if they knew that I have met him and walked with him several times since then!

Miss Pickering speaks of the soldiers and their officers who are quartered here as if they were ravening wolves. After we passed him on the cliff-path this evening

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she said, "That was one of the officers of the 'Prancers.' What's he loitering about here for? After no good, I dare say."

I believe in my heart he was strolling along that way in the hope of meeting *me*. I could only get a general impression of him as he approached. I kept my eyes turned away when he came near, but I saw he looked *perfection*, as he always does.

I have found out all about him now. He is the Hon. Rollo de Vere, a son of Lord Fewacres, and brother of the famous Society girl, the Hon. Blanche de Vere, I have so often read of in the Society column of *Daily Thrills*, and also in the *Sideglancer* and *West End Whispers*. They say she is quite the leader among unmarried girls, and she is always to the front in theatricals, charity bazaars, cotillions, and all those things that *I* know nothing about, and she is pretty too, and always so exquisitely dressed.

Oh, how can he think *me* worth notice when he has a sister like that, and knows

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such a number of other beautifully dressed Society girls!

Last time I met him I had on my best things, a ready-made coat and skirt, that cost one-pound-ten when they were new, a pair of gloves, one-and-elevenpence-three-farthings, some smart shoes that I got at a sale for seven-and-eleven last time I went to Dulchester (Miss Pickering said when I bought them that the Head would not approve of one of her teachers wearing such high heels), and a hat with ribbon bows and some cheap little ostrich tips. To-night I had not even those things on, but just my shabby ulster and cloth motor-cap (the sort of motor-cap worn by those who never motor). I wonder if he thought I looked very awful. Perhaps he won't care to speak to me again.

I was thinking of this all the way back, while Miss Pickering talked on about harmony classes, and Dominant Sevenths, and bringing on the elder girls in Latin, and wishing she were in a school where there was more ambition and strenuous work. Is it possible that Miss Pickering and I

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can be the same sort of creatures, living in the same world? Sometimes I try to imagine what it would be like to be Miss Pickering; to be thirty-six, short, thick-set, never to have been even passably nice-looking, my thoughts scarcely straying from the schoolroom, my past a record of exams. And the future? Well, I happen to know what are the darling hopes she cherishes for the future. To save enough to retire from teaching by-and-by, and settle down with her sister (a resident drawing-mistress in a school somewhere in the North) in a little house or flat *far* enough from London to be fresh and rural, *near* enough to go up for an occasional matinée or concert, or for a day in the British Museum Reading Room. Are there many women living in the world with as little reason for living in it as Miss Pickering? And if so, why, I wonder?

I suppose I am romantic, as she said. I have a right to be, for am I not the child of a romantic marriage?

Oh, how I wish I could have dared to look at him this evening! Was he hurt



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at my looking away? No, I am sure he would understand. All the same, I know I shall not sleep to-night for thinking I have offended him.

II

“ LOVE’S YOUNG DREAM ” — AMID DIFFICULTIES

Amy Robinson’s Diary continued.

Thursday, May 10th. — My twenty-first birthday. How the years fly on! Even miserable, dark years like mine; at least, they were miserable and dark till I saw *him*. I sat in front of the glass to-day and looked at myself. Time can do nothing more to improve me now. I shall remain as I am for a few years (only a very few, situated as I am, working hard at uncongenial work, with a dark, narrow life and none of the comforts and luxuries that prolong a woman’s beauty), and then Time will begin to take away. Why doesn’t it give me unendurable agony to write this? It would have, some months ago. But now I don’t repine. He has seen

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me and admired me before Time has begun to take away, and when Time *does* begin to take away, I think — I'm almost sure — I shall be his wife. It seems like a fairy tale. His wife! And he knows all the most brilliant, beautifully-dressed girls; and I only a poor, shabby little teacher!

Of course, I know I am beautiful; I have known that as long as I've known anything. But I did not imagine that mere beauty, without any surroundings, could make any one like him so passionate and so devoted.

I have met him many times since the evening I passed him on the cliffs, and did not look at him because Miss Pickering was there. Fortunately I have always been in the habit of taking long walks, while the other teachers only care to potter about, or walk with the apron-string, so I have opportunities of seeing my hero, who manages to meet me at some point of my walk a good way from Clifgate. But I must be very careful. I live in a dangerous atmosphere. Little, quiet, peepy-eyed, mathematical Miss Bunce has said once

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or twice lately that, if I didn't take such long walks, she would like to come with me sometimes; or couldn't we go cycling together, as I like to go a good distance?

I said I liked the rough cliff-paths, where one couldn't ride a cycle. And there it rests at present. I feel a little uneasy, for Miss Bunce is rather a terrible little person, and is by no means so much wrapped up in her school-work as Miss Pickering and some of the others.

I told him, next time I met him after that evening, why I hadn't looked at him, and exactly the state of things at the school. He was a little amused, but so sweet and kind. "Poor baby!" he said. "*What a life!*" He says such things to me about myself, my eyes and my smile, that even if I hadn't been vain before, I should be now. He says I am different from any girl he ever met.

What is it about me, I wonder, that is different from other girls? I am not so silly as to think there are no others as pretty. Am I what is called fascinating, then? From his finding me so different

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from other girls, I suppose I must be. Last time I saw him, he had brought me such a sweet little bangle, with two hearts on it all made of diamonds.

“There!” he said. “A woman’s favourite suits in life’s game of cards — hearts and diamonds.”

He put it on my wrist, and it looked so lovely; but I couldn’t accept it, partly because it wouldn’t be right unless we were engaged — though I didn’t put it quite so plainly as that to him — and partly because I have no safe lock-up place to keep it in. Now that I share a room with Miss Bunce, I dare not have anything like that. The locks and keys of the chest of drawers are a fraud, and she would find the little case at once, would know it was a new possession, and would never rest till she found out all about it.

I told him something of this, and he said, “Poor little girl! What a rotten life it is for you! How absurdly out of place you are in that school! Aren’t there enough old and ugly women to be school teachers, that the young and beau-

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tiful should be pressed into the service too?"

He has such a nice, funny, delightful way of talking. You can tell that he's seen everything worth seeing, and knows everything worth knowing, and nothing seems very wonderful to him, or very interesting, or worth taking much trouble about, except (how strange and sweet it seems!) poor little, badly dressed me.

There was a Review yesterday afternoon, and being a half-holiday the boarders went, and we all went, including the Head, very grand in grey silk with a toque to match.

The teachers had on their varying notions of best dress. Many of them favoured the ivory-white cloth or serge skirt worn with a dead-white silk blouse. I wore a new, pinkish voile, with a white coq necklet that I got quite a bargain, and a lace-straw hat with roses. The Head looked disapprovingly at me, but made no remark. I suppose she thought I'd been spending a lot, but all my things were horribly cheap. We had a very good place on one of the stands, and saw everything. *He* looked so



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beautiful, riding past in scarlet and gold. Some of the elder girls, who were sitting near me and farthest from the Head, were talking to each other about him. Maud Carter said he was "fearfully handsome," and Ethel Simpkins said he was "a tremendous swell."

It seemed so delicious, and yet so dreadful, that he should be such a friend of mine. He glanced in our direction, and for a moment I almost fancied I met his eye, and my heart got in the way of my breathing.

"Is anything the matter, Miss Robinson?" said the voice of Miss Bunce. "I'm afraid you don't feel well."

I did not even know she was near me.

III

THE LIVELIEST GIRL IN SOCIETY — PLATO ANCIENT AND MODERN

Blanche de Vere's Diary.

Spring, 1906. — It's a most absurd idea to keep a diary. I can't think how it is I do it; so very unlike the rest of me. But we're nothing if we're not *hereditary* nowadays — everything's put down to heredity, from a snub nose to a bad temper — so, no doubt, in keeping a diary I throw back to some ancestress, who lived in a darling old castle, all fortified and uneven, with little slits for windows, that she dared not look through for fear of getting an arrow in her eye; she couldn't go shopping, because there were no shops; she couldn't pay visits, for fear of being killed or taken prisoner on the way; so she had nothing to do but work tapestry, wonder what her

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knight was up to in the Crusades, or what was the betting on him at the next tournament, and keep a diary on her tablets, full of "prithee" and "by my halidom," and all that sort of thing, I suppose, instead of the nice compact words we use to-day. But she had the advantage of me in one respect. Her tablets were on a chain round her waist, so she couldn't leave her diary about for all and sundry to read. Sometimes I'm almost warned off keeping one, when I think of what happened to Alicia Bellamy down at Bellamy Hall last Christmas. Fancy having written a lot of rot just from *you* to *yourself*, as she did, and then forgetting it and leaving it about; and on going down for it, having remembered it after she was in her room at night, hearing yells of laughter from the smoke-room, and, pausing to listen for the joke, becoming aware of her own diary being read out by her beast of a brother to his pals.

It is really only a very perfect character that can quite safely keep a diary. And there's another thing. One's diary might

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be preserved by some chance and used at a future time by a fearful creature who was writing history, and would put in bits of it as throwing light on the manners and customs of to-day. How awful to think I may be helping to give local colour or something to a dreadful prosy history — and I always hated history, next worst, I think, to arithmetic.

Here is my fourth season in town begun with this spring of 1906. Really, it's becoming serious. Twenty-two, and still Blanche de Vere. "The Powers that be" are beginning to look at me more in anger than in sorrow.

The mater said, yesterday: "You really must make the best use of this season, Blanche. Though there are the two younger girls to think of, I don't know that we can stand the expense of another season in town. You've been a great success, my child, in everything but the *one* thing most important."

For giving a right-down nasty one, there's nobody like a mother, after all!

"We really must begin to consider ways

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and means," she went on. "Dear Rollo is a simply frightful expense. His debts and extravagance are something awful."

"Well," I said, "there's the remedy for all that living in the square close by. I met the remedy last night at Dunstable House, and it tried to be very friendly, in fact, quite sweet and sisterly. *Et pourquoi?* Because the remedy is dying for Rollo."

"You mean Miss Frothingly?"

"Certainly I do, *ma mère*. There is but one Frothingly, and Mabel is his heiress."

"Well, I wish it could be brought about. If, as you say, she really has a fancy for Rollo, the dear boy ought to make the most of his chance, and leave no stone unturned."

"Poor old Rollo!" said I. "He'd be likely to be pretty handy at turning stones about. He's so frightfully stony himself."

"I hear she's overwhelmed with offers," went on the mater. "Her position is quite an assured one. Her uncle is as much attached to her as if she were his own child, and they are saying, Blanche, that

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Sir James is really fatally ill, and cannot live long."

"Oh, poor man, is that so?" said I. "Won't he live long enough to do as the other big brewers have done, and get into the Upper House by the Bottle-and-Jug entrance before it's abolished?"

"My dear Blanche! Don't be so thoughtless. I hope you were nice to Miss Frothingly last night?"

"Neither nice nor nasty, Mamma," I answered. "I preserved an armed neutrality. Mabel Frothingly isn't one of my sort. She's awfully, distinctly middle-class."

"My dear child, people as enormously rich as the Frothinglys can *never* be middle-class."

"Oh, I'm aware that money in sufficiently large doses can cure the disease in a sense. But I still say Mabel Frothingly is *bourgeoise*. She's *arrangée*, enthusiastic, and in love — all symptoms of acute middle-classitis. But, for dear old Rollo's sake, I'll do the civil to her. And now I must be off. I've a hundred places to go to

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before I meet Babs St. Austin at Claridge's."

"You're very intimate with Lady George St. Austin," suggested *madame la mère*, not altogether happily.

"Oh, yes," I said. "Babs and I are as thick as thieves just now. She's a real good sort."

"Yes; but I don't know that it's been quite a good thing for you, Blanche, to be so popular with the young married women, and so much with them. Sometimes I think it would have been better for your matrimonial prospects if you had kept more in what some one calls 'the rosebud garden of girls.'"

"I simply couldn't do it," I said. "'The rosebud garden' isn't good enough for me. Too insipid."

And with that I closed the conference with the authoress of my being, and was off to meet Babs and go to Plato.

I love those lectures, and have *quite* mastered the subject so far. I used to think Plato was something awfully frightful, a dreadful old man, who always wrote

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in Greek, and said no one was to have any love-affairs. But it turns out to be plain English, and he seems to have been quite a nice old person.

There are three heads, as it were, to the study of Plato. You lunch at Claridge's; you have a little darling note-book (*suède* or morocco) to match your frock; and you *disdain matter*. There's the whole thing in that proverbial nutshell, that must be full to overflowing long ago. Never again will any one dare to call Society feather-brained. The room is crammed every time, and we all disdain matter like anything. And, without vanity, I really do believe I disdain matter most awfully. I must try to remember all about the last lecture.

I had been doing some shopping in the morning. First of all, I took darling Pom-pom to be manicured. Then I got some hats at Valérie's. Here's a piece of news she told me. I hardly know whether to laugh or cry at it. Hats are to be worn a weeny bit higher in the crown. Then I called for Pompom at the manicure place,

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and took him to the Burlington to get him a motor-coat and boots. They kept me an age, for *little* doggies are a bit difficult to fit. And then I went straight to Claridge's, where Babs was to meet me. It was all we could do to get a table. All the Plato people were lunching there: Croppy Vavasour and his wife, the Bosh Tresyllyans, and, in fact, everybody.

Trixie, Lady Larkington, and Popsy, Lady Ramsgate, were together, both dressed for sixteen. I suppose they take an interest in Plato because they *knew him personally*. The Duchess of Dunstable and Winnie and Cuckoo Dellamont were in a sort of Greek get-up, with a key-pattern trimming. I never heard of anything so perfectly *ricky*.

I wore pale grey face-cloth, with chin-chilla, a highwayman hat to match, and a *devy* little grey *suede* note-book, with silver corners.

When we had taken our time over luncheon (that's the beauty of having it on the spot) and done ourselves thoroughly well, we all crowded into the lecture-room, and

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began to disdain matter. It was a lovely lecture, and the Professor is a darling man. I'm simply over head and ears. I find no difficulty in following him. He told us that *men* were much easier to understand than *plants*. Why, yes, I see that quite clearly; *much* easier, and so *much* more amusing! *Plants*, he says, we can *never* understand; and I feel so glad now that I didn't bother myself learning botany when they wanted me to. It's all *sheer* waste of time; plants are *not* to be understood.

He told us about some simply *horrid* people, the *Early Christians*, who distorted dear Plato's views, and actually said — the wretches! — that women were the origin of evil. These disky creatures are responsible for that odious notion of celibacy that is not yet stamped out, and gives girls and their mammas so much trouble and anxiety. At our last party a crowd of Early Christians stood by the door, and simply *wouldn't* dance, though they'd been squared with a good dinner, and some of the prettiest girls in Society, with their prettiest frocks on, were waiting to dance with them.



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And now I think I have set down what bores would call a most *exhaustive* account of the Plato philosophy. We all feel so pleased at being such clever, thoughtful people. The dear Professor considers that there's an *immense* amount of mental activity among us.

So much for the bookworms and blues who have looked down on us, and have called us empty and *frivy*.

IV

A SOCIETY BUREAU AND A VISIT TO THE " SISTER - SCRIBBLERS "

Blanche's Diary continued.

Thursday, April 10th. — It's just simply absurd of the mater to say what she does about " the rosebud garden of girls," and my being so pally with Babs St. Austin and others of the married ones. They're ever so much better company than the great majority of *girls*, whose conversation consists of nothing but " Oh, no," and " Oh, yes," and " Isn't it ripping?" or " Isn't it rotten?" Those remarks are all very well, I know, and we couldn't do without them, but to be amusing you must have a vocabulary a bit bigger than that.

And Babs and George are quite a model couple. Their only fault is that they're not rich, and *that's* because they married

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for love, which, though silly, isn't exactly disgraceful. And they both work like Trojans, or Spartans, or whatever those prosy people were called who were always at it, in order to keep up their position in that state, and so on.

Babs is frightfully clever. Besides writing over the signature "A Duke's Daughter-in-law" in the *Sideglancer*, she contributes to lots of other papers, and her "Gossip" and accounts of parties, and the column of "Queer Questions for the Initiated" ("Was she *really* there?" "Are they going to hush it up?" and so on) in *West End Whispers*, are full of snap. Certainly she came a nasty cropper once, when an article of hers appeared describing minutely a Court function that had been indefinitely postponed, but she's lived that down, and makes quite a big income by her pen. How devy! Considering bridge debts and bills.

Then, as well as writing, she takes *new* people in hand, and makes it pay very well. Also she helps Lord George to run his "Matrimonial and Social Bureau" in Bond Street, which is a prodigious success.

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In his advertisements he says it "supplies a long-felt want" — but in private he explains that the "long-felt want" is in his own pocket! They do a simply roaring business. I heard the other day that the youngest Vavasour, Kiddy, is one of their staff of nice boys who take visitors about, and escort lone women to the theatre and concerts, and so on.

Then, George and Babs give lessons, at five guineas each, to members of the out-lying tribes who want to be coached in — How to behave, how to eat, how to drink, how to speak, what to say. The lessons are given in the dining-room and drawing-room behind the Bureau, and are great fun. Sample meals are laid, and the table is always packed with pupils. A luncheon lesson is five guineas, and they are taught what to wear, what dishes and wines are right, and how to take them, and the proper luncheon conversation.

Dinner lessons are ten guineas each, with Babs at the head of the table and George at the foot. I went to one of them for a lark, as a sham pupil, and I felt like

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rushing away from the table once or twice to roar at the look of the poor things eating their dinner and drinking their wine with their eyes fixed on Babs, like children saying a lesson; or, in the case of the men (for they've men pupils, too), watching Lord George. A morning call, with tea in the drawing-room, is the same price as a luncheon lesson. Among their pupils is the rich widow of a butcher from somewhere near Regent's Park, one of those unknown regions that aren't coloured on the map. She brings such lovely lists of questions regarding social ethics to propound to Babs in confidence. Here are two choice specimens: "If a lady felt she was going to sneeze while at a party, what ought she to do?" "If a lady choked at a dinner-party, would she be cut afterwards?"

"Poor thing!" said Babs, in answer to the last query. "If she choked very badly, she'd have to be cut *at once*, I'm afraid — tracheotomy, you know."

This afternoon I had tea at the Sister Scribblers' Club, and I'm thinking how

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lovely it would be to be a literary woman. I'm simply *obsessed* with the idea. (*Obsessed* is a word I picked up at the Club, and I think it rather *chic*.) It must be quite delicious to be always discussing plots and characters, and calling out, "I shall *use* that," when anything striking is said.

Babs took me. She's been a Sister Scribbler for a year. The Club is in Hamilton Place, and they *have* done themselves well. Their smoke-room is deliciously comfy, and can give a stone and a beating to ours at the "Camellia." There was a perfect babel in the tea-room. All the Sister Scribblers' tongues seemed to be "the pens of ready writers," as Shakespeare says. Babs pointed out such lots of celebrities. Quite close to us was a group who've all gone into ever so many editions, and see themselves on railway bookstalls, and know "the glory and the nothing of a name." There was Mrs. Henry Drysdale, who writes those learned, semi-theological novels that *some* people can read and *I* can't, discussing the character of her latest

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hero, Edgar Humbore, the Church of England curate whose gradual conversion (or is it *per?*) to Mahommedanism takes up 200 chapters. Wonderful to say, she was one of the smartest Sister Scribblers present, having on an unmistakable Olga Fiton frock and a Valérie toque; while "Anno Domini" (Miss Jane Prescott, for private circulation), who writes those awfully strong, lurid kinds of novels that girls aren't supposed to read, and that poky people consider improper because they don't understand *Realism in Art* — "Anno Domini," whom one would *expect* to be smart and *voyante*, is simply the dowdiest, quietest of mice, in a fearful coat and skirt, and *specs!*

The Duchess of Clackmannan had tea with us. She's been a Sister Scribbler since her Miracle Play, *The Ark*, had a run of two nights at the Magnificent. (Those horrid critics called it drivel till they found who had written it, and *then* they did her justice, and said she had handled the character of *Noah* in a *masterly* way.)

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She was simply awfully sweet. When I said I longed to qualify for admission to the S. S. by appearing in print, she told me to send something to *The Peeress*, which she partly owns, I believe. Babs looked a bit spiteful, I thought, and then she asked the Duchess if it was true that she (the D.) was writing a *roman à clef*, in which she was going to give us all away.

"No fear!" said the dear Duchess. "If I use you at all, my dear, I sha'n't give you away. I shall *sell* you for a good big publisher's cheque. We're all on the make now, aren't we?"

I thought it very smart of her.

I was introduced to the famous Sybil Vansittart. They say the scene of her next romance is to cover the whole solar system. I told her I simply adored her books — and so I do, though I can never quite get through them — and that it was my ambition to be literary. She smiled a sad, sweet smile — she had on a Liberty frock and a picture hat, and kept her back to the light — and shook her head.

"Don't be in a hurry to leave the beaten

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track," she said softly. "Fame does not spell happiness for us women. I sometimes look back to the days when I was a simple, unknown girl, to whom the secrets of life and death had not yet been revealed, and sigh, 'Ah, happy girl!'"

It was certainly awfully sweet of her. All the same, it must be great fun to be a genius, and come out of the crowd.

I'm writing an account of Mrs. Bosh Tresyllyan's last Soap Bubble Tea to send to *The Peeress*. I flatter myself there's a good bit of snap in it.

V

“ THE GREATEST OF THESE IS CHARITY ”

Blanche's Diary continued.

Tuesday, May 16th. — I'm doing what I can to help on the affair of Rollo and Mabel Frothingly. We've had her to some of our parties, and I've been to some of theirs, and Rollo has run up from Clifgate, which is only an hour from town, and made himself agreeable, like a good boy. She's very much gone on him, I can see, and he might have her for the asking, as far as *she's* concerned. I don't know what the old man's sentiments may be; he's an invalid, and shows very little, but he couldn't have any objection to her marrying into such a family as ours, though he may have set his heart on her having a peer or an eldest son; and there's Geoffrey, older than Rollo.

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But though Rollo would be glad enough to pay his debts and live in a pecunious way ever after, he'll be sure to jib at marrying. They all do, and I don't blame them. If I were not a girl, I should, too, but our poor, unlucky, oppressed sex must either marry or be considered failures.

This is certainly going to be a Charity Season, and I'm going to be worked half dead in the sacred cause.

When Shakespeare said, "Charity suffereth long," he must have meant those who *work* for charity. And how right he was when he said, "Faith, hope, and charity, but the greatest of these is charity." Yes, indeed, I should think so! As for faith and hope, they don't get a look in, but *charity's* all over the shop.

I'm rather obsessed with Shakespeare just now, for next week we give our amateur performance of *Hamlet* at the "Magnificent" in aid of the Seaside Home for Necessitous and Neuralgic Needlewomen. Our *Hamlet* is Lady Clarges, and her reading of the part is that Hamlet was *very much* misunderstood, but *not* mad. She wants to

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put in one or two contralto songs, but I don't think we shall let her. She looks simply awfully sweet in her "suit of sables;" the "inky cloak" she dispenses with altogether. I do *Laertes*, and our fencing scene, I fully expect, will go with a bang. Babs wanted to double the parts of *Rosencrantz* and *Guildenstern*, but it would be too much for one person, especially as they are often on at the same time. Croppy Vavasour is the ghost, and a very good one. He means to catch a little cold before the performance, to get his voice nice and sepulchral.

Then, the day after *Hamlet*, there is the Early British Bazaar, in aid of — I forget what, but something *very* deserving. We're none of us quite certain how Early Britons ought to dress. Croppy said something about *woad*. What sort of material is that, I wonder, and how ought it to be made? I never was good at history. The drink-bar is to be a model of Stonehenge; but as to the correct kind of drinks, we're all rather in a hole. Some one suggested pottles of sack, and some one else said mead, or metheglin; but Croppy says No, the

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Early Britons drank stuff called frumenty.
I'd no idea he was so well informed.

Babs and I are to lead a sort of religious dance of Druidesses. After the bazaar, I shall have to put in the opera and three parties, so there won't be much left of me.

Some of us have a lovely idea for helping the Fund for the Orthodox Old. We want to get up Living Pictures, all from sacred subjects, and give the show in St. Paul's Cathedral. I'm *sure* we could coax the dear Bishop to say yes; but then there's the Dean and Chapter too, to be considered. What sort of thing *is* a Chapter, I wonder? Is it coaxable?

The concert at Clackmannan House, in aid of Crippled Chauffeurs, went off quite nicely. The Duchess played a Nocturne and Ballade of Chopin in her usual brilliant style. That spiteful little Mrs. Jimmy Sharpe says the dear Duchess *always* plays Chopin, because he's so full of wrong notes that a few extra ones don't matter. *I* did a coon song and cake-walk; and Babs whistled *Rule Britannia*, with variations

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of her own (very much her own! Between me and myself, no one else would own them.) The Bosh Tresyllyans did a clog-dance; and for a professional draw we had the Baby Flautist, little Presto Piccolo. He played a tremendous thing of Boroshki's, and was fed with a bottle between the movements. Of course it fetched 'em. But I begin to think the Wonder Child is just about played out (literally), and that the *swing of the pendulum* is going to make *extreme old age* the correct thing on the concert platform. I hear, on the best authority, that a violinist of ninety-five, and a pianist over a hundred, are to be *the rage* next season.

People are talking of a Lantern Fête to be given in the grounds of Ramsgate House for Lady Ramsgate's pet charity, The Hopeless Sufferers, — masks to be worn till supper-time, and baby games to be played.

Apropos of the Ramsgates, poor Dicky Sandys is really hard hit over the Dolly de Lacy affair. He deserted her on the very *brink* of an offer, and now he's engaged to

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her grandmother, Popsy, Lady Ramsgate. Of course Dicky isn't doing anything so *Early Victorian* as to pine or break her heart, but she vows she'll cut both her grandmother and Dolly.

The question arises whether one *can* cut a grandmother. Myself, I should think she would be too tough.

Friday, June 15th. — The mater came to my den to have a half-reproachful, half-affectionate, half-advising chat. I've put half three times. I wonder if that's bad arithmetic. What do I care if it is!

"Oh, mother mine!" I said; "not that look at your loving and dutiful child! Not that look that means reproof for her *singlicity*, mixed with grief that no one has yet laid his millions and his cap of maintenance at her feet. But they don't go much together nowadays, do they? The caps of maintenance are being carried round among the Pork Kings and Oil Emperors at the Other Side."

"Do be serious, my child, for a moment."

"Impossible, *ma mère*. I've earned the

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reputation of the liveliest girl in Society, you know, and I must keep it up at all times and seasons. And just at this moment I see no reason for regarding any one or anything in a serious light, or rather shade."

"But about the garden-party yesterday?"

"Oh, yes, I know. You want to hear about Miss Frothingly and Rollo. Well, she was all there, in a white and mauve Félix frock, but *not* worn in the proper Félix way, and a Valérie hat, but *quite* the wrong expression of face to go with it. The new Valérie hat wants a pensive, slightly *distrain* look. That girl would make a better impression if she sent her *frocks* to parties and stayed away herself."

"Oh, you are a little hard on her, Blanche," said the mater, who *means* to like and admire the ale girl. "She's a pretty girl, after all."

"Don't you mean that they're all after *her*, mamma?" I said. "No, she isn't pretty; she has a fixed colour, which is the unpardonable sin, and she has those floating eyes that I can't stand. But peace

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be with her! I shall be very glad to welcome her as Mrs. Rollo. Oh, what *do* you think! she blushed quite furiously when Rollo went up to her yesterday — the fixed colour spread everywhere, and became quite a Red Sea. Wasn't it the crowning point of *bourgeoisie*? Dolly de Lacy and I were sitting together near by, and he said, 'I didn't know blushing was ever done now. Really, you know, it's a performance that has the priceless charm of novelty, and I think it quite deserved a mention on the invite-cards — *Miss Frothingly will blush at 4.30*. Good old Rollo! He seems an odds-on favourite for the great Ale Cup.' ”

“ Well, I hope Dolly's right,” said the mater; “ I'm glad dear Rollo is doing his duty. If I can see him married to Miss Frothingly this season, and *you* advantageously disposed of too, my child, some of my chief anxieties will be done with.”

And with these impressive maternal words ringing in my ears, I went off to tell Sidonie what to pack for my week-end at the Croppy Vavasours.

VI

VIEWS ON WEEK-ENDS — SERMONS ON WEAK POINTS

Blanche's Diary continued.

Quite the nicest part of the London season is getting away from it every week, and the ambitious hostess who wants to come out of the crowd, must do so now by means of week-ends, and not dinners, dances, and concerts,

Some people like Balloon Week-ends. Myself, I've done with them and consider ballooning a fraud. The rush of the ascent, which lasts about two-two's, is all the sensation you get. You've had your fun then, and there's not another thrill to be got out of it. The biggest things of this kind have been given by the Bullyon-Boundermers, new people that Babs has taken in hand. They've parted pretty

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freely over it, giving a souvenir set with diamonds to each of their guests who made an ascent, and lots of people have gone just to get these, for we're nothing if we're not greedy nowadays. Babs has been taking down parties (it was in the bond that there was always to be a Duchess, if poss.), and all went well till her party included the Duchess of Dunstable, who, though *twenty* years older and *five* stone heavier than a woman ever *ought* to be, likes to have a try at everything. The ascent was all right. The Duchess was in a charming temper, and frisky as a kitten. But in coming down, "somebody blundered," as Milton says, and they were stuck in the top of a tree for more than an hour, during which it came on to rain in torrents, and Babs says the Duchess's language was *almost* worthy of the *Duke*!

They had to be got down with long ladders, and fire-escapes, and all sorts of horrors; and now the Duchess goes about warning every one against ballooning that *isn't properly managed*, and saying her digestion is ruined, while the poor Bullyon-Bounder-mere people are covered with confusion.

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The competition in hitting on something new and snappy is simply ghastly. That little Mrs. Jimmy Sharpe thought she had got a wonderful idea with her Palace of Truth week-ends — every one to speak bare truth for three days. None of the nice people accepted, and she had to fill her house with a poky crowd that spelt complete failure.

The converted cannibal chief, Hullabaloo, who's come here about his tribe or his island or something being taken under British protection, has been in great request as a week-end attraction. There's been *particular competition* to go in to dinner with him. They say that in his time he's eaten quite a fair-sized crowd of his friends and relatives. I had the luck to go in to dinner with him once, and keep it as a precious memory. There are indeed thrills in *that!* It gave me simply delicious creeps to think that he *might* revert to his earlier diet, and make an entremet of *me!*

Just back from week-ending with the Croppy Vavasours. On the whole, I con-

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sider that of all those I've *tried conclusions* with, *they* take the biscuit. This last was a "Kiddy" week-end, no one supposed to be over six, one-syllable words to be used. I flatter myself I was quite in the first flight of girl kiddies. Every one but Babs thought my pelisse and Dutch bonnet hugely becoming, my socks were a *dream*, my strap-shoes the last word in baby chausserie, and I had the most *devy* doll that was *ever*! Of the boy kiddies, Norton Vavasour, Croppy's brother, was easily first. The way he whipped a top, flew a kite, and did baby talk, was simply immense, and his pinafores were things of sheer joy.

It was quite a nice little surprise to find that he's come back to civilized life. They put him into diplomacy, but he came out again; and since then he's been ranching in one part of the world and sheep-farming in another, and then prospecting for diamonds in South Africa; and now he's back again, *very much bronzed* — and nothing more! It *does* seem hard to get only *bronze*, when you try for *gold* and *diamonds*.

When last we used to see so much of

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each other, I was a little kiddy of thirteen, and he a great, big fellow (at least I thought so then, but I find now he's only middle-sized) of eighteen. We were bitter foes in those days. He was always teasing me; but I'm glad to remember how often I got back on him. The way we met on Saturday and recognized each other was distinctly sweet.

A lot of us were out in the gardens. Croppy was chasing butterflies with a net, and Gwendolen was sitting on the lawn, in long clothes, playing with a rattle. Babs and a lot of others were playing ball, and exercising their one-syllable vocabulary. I was looking on, nursing my doll and sucking my thumb, when some one came up, with the proper infantine toddle, and said, "Ickle girl, will 'oo be my ickle sweetheart?"

We looked at each other for a few moments, and then he said, "Why, it's little Blanche grown up!"

"Ickle Blanche *not* grown up," I said; "ickle Blanche grown *down*. Last time I saw you, Mr. Norton Vavasour, I was

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thirteen; *now* I'm only three. And you that I used to think a great, big man then, why you're only a fine boy of two now, and still in frocks."

"Iss, I'se still in f'ocks," he said, reverting to the baby language that was *de rigueur*. "But I'se goin' into knickerbockers soon. I'se goin' into boots and pockets."

We played up to each other in style, and it was great fun.

"Oo was a bad boy in those days," I said, pouting. "Oo was always teasing ickle Blanche, pullin' her hair, hidin' her dolls, and makin' ickle Blanche cry."

"Ickle Blanche can pay me back now," he said. "She can tease me and torment me more'n I ever teased *her*, and make me cry louder'n I ever made *her* cry."

Norty is quite a nice boy, and has what old-fashioned people used to call a Greek profile. Our *views of life* agree on many points, and we are by way of being great pals.

He is piloting a Mr. Josiah Multimill, a fearful man that he met somewhere at the back of beyond, who's made all the

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money Norty *ought* to have made, only things never go to the right people. He says he's taken on by no means a soft job in teaching this *disky* person parlour tricks, and would throw it up if he could afford to. The creature has positively taken the Flummery's place near Windsor, and *insists* on having week-ends! It's no use Norty telling him it won't do, and that he must begin with dinners and concerts in town. He simply won't listen. Norty is to get the people every week, and is to have quite a free hand as to ex's. Poor boy, he consulted me about these Multimill week-ends, and said with quite a worried look, "The old rotter will end by giving *me* more wrinkles than I can give *him*."

We discussed a hundred plans for getting people to go, from having down the whole Covent Garden Opera company, to hiding presents (nothing to cost less than a hundred pounds) about the house, and setting Mr. Multimill's "friends" to hunt for them.

Life's a funny business — especially its week-ends!

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Friday, June 22nd. — With strawberries-and-cream, roses, mousseline-de-soie, and garden-parties, comes the yearly effort to reform us and make us better boys and girls. It's an unusually vigorous effort this year. Father Hilary is letting us have it right and left. I've not been able to go to any of the sermons yet, but from what I hear they must be rather fun. Norty Vava-sour went to one, and said it was "worthy of John Knox." I think he meant that for praise, but as I've never heard the Rev. Mr. Knox preach I can't be quite certain on the point.

Of course, we don't deserve what's said of us. For instance, that "there is nothing real about us except our sins." As for not being "real," I've always understood that ours is the only class that dares to *be* real and natural. We leave affectation and pretence to *ces autres* — those strange, out-lying tribes, who are all "ladies" and "gentlemen," and reverse when they valse. As to "*sins*," of course I've nothing to say on that subject. Except in church and sermons, it's a word that *isn't used*.

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Du reste, there are plenty of us who, so far from taking the preacher's words to heart or trying to profit by his warnings, are quite pleased that their little peccadillos should be condemned from the pulpit. Yesterday, as I was coming out of Olga Fiton's — (what lovely Ascot frocks she has created for me! Wonder how they're going to be paid for; especially the "emotional" one for Cup Day, a riot of rose-coloured chiffon, white ribbons, and white lace, meaning, "I am happy, for I have backed winners") — Trixie, Lady Larkington, who was whizzing past on her motor-cycle (Captain Mashem, as usual, in the trailer), slowed down when she caught sight of me, and screamed out, "Blanche, dearest, have you heard the news? My little Free-and-Easies in Hill Street have been *pointedly* referred to in the last Reformation Sermon. Isn't it lovely? I feel two inches taller. I've had such heaps of congrats. by 'phone and wire, haven't I, Baby?" — this to Captain Mashem. She wound up with, "To be *photographed* is good, to be *paragraphed* is better; but

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when you've arrived at being *preached about*, my dear girl, you've got *right there!*" and she was off again.

I hear that Lady Thistledown, who happened by some chance to be in town the other Sunday, went to church and heard a Reformation Sermon, in which an unmistakable allusion was made to the Thistledown and Hurlingham case. Poor little woman, she turned quite faint (she's been a bit dotty and given to fainting ever since the *cruel* ordeal she went through at the hands of Lasher, K. C., last autumn in the Law Courts), and had to go out and be revived in the porch. We were all so sorry for her when we heard of it. She was at the Bosh Tresyllyans' last night looking distractingly sweet, but rather pensive and fragile. Every one was congratulating her on her approaching marriage to Tommy Hurlingham.

Babs is particularly hurt at our being told that we "have no sense of religion," working as hard as we do for Charity. She says it's enough to make any one vow never to act in another Charity Play, or sing at a

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Charity Concert, or sell at a Charity Bazaar. She says also, with regard to the preacher having predicted with sorrow that any little shortcomings some of us may occasionally be guilty of "will percolate through the classes right down to the masses," that, "from *his* point of view, that ought to be all right, and should lead to what *he* would call our *conversion*, for it's quite certain that when our manners and customs come to be adopted by Clapham and Brixton, *we* shall have done with them for ever!"

That's what Babs says, but I've no idea of sitting at *her* feet to get my opinions. I'm beginning to think she's just a bit frivolous and superficial, and has an illogical mind.

Of course, it *does* seem sad that, as Father Hilary says, "the West End churches are empty." But is it *all* our fault? Sunday's such an *impossible* day for church! About the *fullest* day of the seven. And besides, we're hardly any of us in town. If the services could be changed to a more convenient day, say Tuesday, when we're



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all back from week-ending, I'm not sure we'd simply *roll* up, especially if a piping hot Reformation Sermon were on the programme.

VII

TWO UP - TO - DATE ENGAGEMENTS

Blanche's Diary continued.

Wednesday, July 25th. — A lot of water has flowed under the bridge — and a lot of bridge has made some unlucky people want to jump into the water — since I opened this book last.

The close of the season is in sight. Every one says it's been a dull one and a "failure," yet every one professes to have had individually a "ripping time;" so it must have been the others who were stupid. A good many hostesses who *think* they have made their mark will find that the impartial eye of history judges *otherwise*. Norty and I are agreed that the only hostess who has offered us *anything* of a novelty in London this summer has been Lady Clarges with her Jiu-jitsu balloon parties.

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Myself, It nearly had my season spoiled by Aunt Goldmont coming out of her retirement and quartering herself on us while she looked for a town house. She did her level to make herself a first-class nuisance; but as she's a widow without encumbrance, and simply rolling, of course we have to be civil to her. Norty and Babs have been very good in taking her off our hands a bit. At first she was inclined to be boresome and preachy, but, after making her own observations on some choice specimens of our juvenile-antiques, she took on a sort of ponderous skittishness, and was duly grateful to me (showing it in a very decent way, I own) for helping her to put back the clock by taking her to the right places for her frocks, and toques, and — oh, my giddy Aunt! — her transformations.

She now wishes to be styled "Georgie, Lady Goldmont," and doesn't remember *anything* more than fifteen years ago. When she first came to us she had a memory as long as a court-train, and used to talk about things back in the 'seventies.

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Curious effect of London air! No wonder Londoners are so given to losing their memories altogether, and themselves too!

One of the brightest spots in the season has been having Norty for a pal. We've met constantly, and have had simply splendid talks about "Men and Things," as he puts it, though I own I *don't* think it a particularly nice way of referring to *my* sex. He is by way of being quite a philosopher, and his philosophy is that "Life is a rotten business, and nothing matters much."

Together we have looked at people who form our world by "dry light" (that's another of his clever phrases), and have sized them up with all their littlenesses and absurdities. It isn't that we think we're better than they are, but — well, we're *philosophers*, and look at things accordingly. I've lent Norty my notes on the Plato lectures last spring, and we've thoroughly discussed the Platonic philosophy. He says my views have plenty of *insight*, but that, like all women's views, they lack *grasp*. I don't mind about *that*.

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I would never wish to be thought grasping.

Norty is a dear boy, and, though it was quite understood between us from the first that we could neither of us afford to be romantic — and, *of course*, we would not do anything so *provincial*, not to say *suburban*, as to fall in love — yet I do hope he won't be miserable when he hears that I've said Yes. It's not the sort of Yes for people to be sentimental and Early Victorian and to kiss me and cry over me about. It's a prudent, common-sense Yes.

He's been following me like my shadow (that's to say, like a shadow twenty times as big and stout as mine) for weeks, and I knew it was bound to come, and that I was bound to say Yes when it did come. Still, I didn't know he went to Mrs. Jimmy Sharpe's "spur-of-the-moment" parties, and when I got the postcard this morning with "Come and have some fun" on it, I didn't expect to meet him there. But what's the dif.! As well now, if it had to come.

We'd been having Whitechapel Lancers,

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and I was sitting out in one of the nooks Mrs. Jimmy prides herself on making as original and unexpected as poss., waiting for Piggy de Lacy to bring me something cool to drink. For once in a way I was feeling a bit serious, for I was thinking of some bad luck I've had at bridge that they don't know of at home, and of Olga Fiton's last enormous bill and what "the Powers that be" had said of it in the morning, when I found my big, stout shadow standing looking down at me.

"The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts," he said, and then seemed immensely proud of being able to quote that well-known line of Shakespeare's. "Say, rather," said I, "the bills of youth are long, long bills, and the debts of youth are big, big debts." I spoke without thinking. I wanted to say something smart, and by trying to do so I brought on the crisis that I've really been running away from for weeks.

He sat down by me, and before I knew what was happening he was saying, in a hesitating way, that if he might help me

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in any little troubles of that kind he would be only too proud and glad to do so; and just as I was getting up the scaffolding for the proper look of haughty surprise he added, hurriedly, —

“Of course I shouldn’t dare to offer help of — of — that kind, if I did not at the same time offer myself as a husband, if you’ll have me. I’ve admired you since the first time I saw you, and for some weeks, I’ve — I’ve — loved you.”

Well, well, it was bound to come. And the answer was in the affirmative, as they say in the House. It’s kismet.

“I’m the proudest, happiest man in the world to-night,” he said. “Now that I’ve won my Blanche.”

He looked particularly stout and bald. If only his face were thinner, and his hair thicker, what an improvement it would be! And, granting that he *was* as happy as he said, happiness does not become him.

Piggy appeared in the offing with the “something cool to drink,” and vanished again when he got the hang of things, to my great disgust, for I was horribly thirsty.

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"And now," said my brand-new fiancé, "I must have one of the little rings off this fair hand, as a guide to the size of *another ring*, a betrothal ring that shall have the biggest and purest solitaire diamond a ring ever *did* have, to serve as a lighthouse to — to —"

"To warn vessels off a dangerous coast?" I said. "That's what lighthouses do, isn't it? It's not a very flattering simile."

He laughed at that, and then he got serious and sentimental, and — oh, well, it's all in the day's work, I suppose, but sometimes I wish — however, that's weak and missyish. "The Powers that be" would never have forgiven me, nor would I ever have forgiven myself, had I refused Josiah Multimill, for he is rich "beyond the dreams," and might have had any girl for the asking. The Duchess of Dunstable made a dead set at him for Winnie or Cuckoo. Then I *must* think of my family. My fourth season is just over, Joan has been out more than a year, Hildegarde is *clamouring* to leave the school-room and let loose her attractions on So-

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ciety, and, in short, *London* expects every *girl* to do her duty, just as *England* expects every *man* to do his.

I believe I've written some horrid things about Josiah Multimill in this Diary. Shall I tear them out, now I'm engaged to him? What rot I'm writing! As if it mattered in the least how I've written of him, or how I think of him!

I own I'm a bit worried about Norty. Will he be bitter and angry? I wonder. Being philosophers, we have quite settled such matters together, in *theory*, but, when it comes to *practice*, men aren't quite so sensible or consistent as we are.

Thursday, July 26th. — I needn't have worried about how Norty would take the news of my engagement.

It seems he has been engaged a week to Aunt Goldmont!

I won't say I'm *surprised*. After four Seasons, to be *surprised* is a *Lost Art*. But one can *still* be *deeply disgusted*.

VIII

THE BREWER'S HEIRESS — A CONTRAST IN GIRLS — SIR JAMES FORBIDS THE BANNS

Mabel Frothingly's Diary.

Friday, July 27th. — Does he really care for me, or is it only because I am my uncle's heiress that he is so attentive? I am beginning to care so much for him that I can't bear to suspect him, as I have suspected other young men who have been attentive.

And, after all, why *should* I suspect him? It isn't as if I were old or plain. Just twenty-two, and what most people would call pretty, even if I were not an heiress. I have a fine complexion, though I own I have sometimes more colour than I want of an evening; my features are rather good, and I have a nice figure. I really have no reason for suspecting that, when

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he seeks me out, it is only because of the fortune I shall have.

And I won't listen to the stories people are so ready to whisper about him. They all have some motive for telling me those things. Only to-day Lady Tattleton was telling me, pretending to be so sorry all the time, that he is very wild and a great trouble to Lord and Lady Fewacres, and that there are stories about him down at Clifgate, where the 2nd Prancers are quartered now. And when I showed that I didn't want to listen any longer, she began about that dreadful little Sidney Tattleton, and how blest she was as a mother, in having such a steady, admirable son, and what a model husband he would make some lucky girl some day! I know well enough what that means. I am used to being angled for by mothers of sons. But they won't succeed in setting me against Rollo; and I'm not ashamed to own to myself that I've fallen in love with him.

What fascinates me particularly in him is a sort of air about him that it's not

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worth any girl's while to care much for him. I don't know how he manages to convey the impression, but he does convey it, and it makes me like him all the more.

Then, how handsome he is !

Lady Fewacres is very nice to me, without being in the least overdone, as people have a trick of being towards a girl who will be worth two million. Blanche I didn't seem to get on with very well at first; but I'm getting to know her better now, and we call each other "Blanche" and "Mabel." She is immensely popular and sought after in Society, and I hope it's not through any feeling of jealousy that I'm not quite able to see *why*. She is very lively and satirical, and I have no doubt men find her very fascinating, but she is not as well educated as I am, and she seems to me to be rather ignorant. She makes dreadful mistakes when she mentions things in history, and she mixes up the poets most absurdly. Uncle would be very angry with *me* if I made such mistakes; but people seem to like it and admire it in *her*. I can't help rather liking

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her, because she is *his* sister, and is a fascinating girl, too. But I am afraid she is rather heartless and callous. I heard it rumoured to-day that she is just engaged to Mr. Josiah Multimill, who is fabulously rich, but middle-aged and horrid. Of course, she doesn't care in the least for him.

I went to tea with her this afternoon, in her own "den." It's a funny room for a girl. I wonder what Uncle would say to it. On the walls hang a big photo of Miss Jermyn's filly, "Give-'em-beans," that won the Oaks; another of Gussie Curtis, the champion jockey; and others of Lil Lightfoot of the "Eye-opener," Goliath, the Strong Man, and Raymond Seymour, of the "Magnificent." On the mantelpiece was standing a framed photo of Mr. Norton Vavasour, who's been so much with her this season.

As I looked round the walls, she said, "You won't see Rollo there. If you want to refresh yourself with a sight of *him*, my dear, you must look in that red-silk box."

It was very embarrassing, and I was

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mortified to find myself blushing. "I was not looking for Mr. Rollo de Vere," I said, indifferently. And then, thinking to pay her back splendidly, I added: "I was looking for Mr. Multimill's picture."

"Oh," she said, coolly, as she poured out the tea, "You won't see Mr. Multimill; I only have *friends* here."

"And *he* is *more* than a friend, isn't he?" said I. I felt that I was coming out rather strong. "Will you let me congratulate you, Blanche, and wish you happiness?"

"I can't prevent you, if you *will* do such old-fashioned things," she said, laughing. "But please, *please* express yourself in modern language. *Happiness*? The word is quite, *quite* obsolete, and means something that we no more believe in nowadays than we believe in the philosopher's stone, or the potter's wheel, or any of those old-world fables."

(There was another instance of her ignorance.)

"Wish me success, wish me power, pleasure, excitement (if one woman ever *can*

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wish another well) — but don't wish me happiness, for there *isn't* such a thing!"

"It depends on the person, I suppose," I said. "But, Blanche, why do you speak of the potter's wheel as a fable, like the philosopher's stone? It was a valuable discovery, wasn't it? and was used for centuries in making pottery."

I was determined to show her I was better informed than she was. But she only laughed, and said, "How should I know? The idea of taking the trouble to enter into such a subject, or to remember anything that's been said for two minutes. You must learn, Mabel Frothingly, that I'm irresistible, that whatever I say is right, and that I'm never to be corrected."

Think of a girl being able to say such things! It only shows how Society success has spoilt her. And yet she doesn't *really* seem conceited, after all.

"I see you're one of the good girls who were fond of their book in schoolroom days," she went on. "I have a friend, a great, *great* friend, who's like that too —

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Daphne Verinder. We used to do lessons together once, and that girl *actually* used to *learn* things!"

"Well," I said, "if we didn't learn things in our schoolroom days, we should be terribly ignorant when we came out in Society."

"It wasn't *my* way," she replied. "I'm naturally quick, and when they proposed to teach me anything, I used to get a sort of general view of the subject, and if it was one that didn't interest me, I refused to absorb any more of it. And my plan seems to have answered pretty well. The World, and the World's Wife too, find me pretty much to their taste. You can take it from me, that Society won't like you any the *less* for your not knowing the exact year when Edward the First came over from Normandy, or who assassinated Oliver Cromwell; and as to arithmetic, I found I never needed more than the first rule, simple addition, or putting this and that together!"

"But," I said desperately, "it wasn't Edward the First who came over from

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Normandy, it was William; and Oliver Cromwell *wasn't* assassinated."

"What's it matter?" she said. "Will you light up?"

We had done tea, and she lit a cigarette, and so did I. A very dainty and complete little smoking-stand was one of the features of her den, and her smoking-coat was so *chic* and sweet that I really must have one like it — tobacco-brown chiffon-vélours, with old lace, and the fastenings little enamelled cigarettes.

"You're not much of a smoker," she said presently, "I can see that."

She was thrown back in a lounge chair, evidently enjoying her cigarette thoroughly.

"No," I answered. "I'm not so accustomed to smoking as you seem to be. Fact is, my uncle doesn't like girls to smoke, and would be displeased if I smoked at home, so I only do it occasionally, when friends ask me."

"I see. Your uncle belongs to what people vaguely call the Old School. It must have been a dreadful school to at-

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tend, that Old School — chockful of *forms*, wasn't it? And they taught the *girls* fainting, and blushing, and fancy work, and the *boys* general priggishness — and *both* hypocrisy. I'm glad the Old School has closed its doors, and that the masters and mistresses are dismissed, and the children gone home for perpetual holidays."

"If, as you say, my uncle belongs to it," I said, "it must have been an excellent school, for my uncle is —"

"Why, of course he is, my dear," she cut in. "Every one knows that. Aren't the newspapers always saying it? The penny and the halfpenny dailies too. What the halfpenny dailies say may be only half true, but what the *penny* dailies say must be *quite* true. No, Mabel, don't look grave about it. You're making the great mistake of taking me seriously. It's a thing I don't do myself, and nobody else does. Come, enjoy that cigarette, and smile on me once more. I can't have you sitting pensive and thinking, 'What a callous, worldly girl! How unworthy to be *his* sister!' " and she laughed heartily.

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It's too bad of her to say such things, when there's no engagement between us, or anything; so uncomfortable for me. I had to laugh, too, though I couldn't help blushing again.

I could not fail to notice what a magnificent solitaire diamond she had in her engagement ring. I never saw such a stone; set clear and quite lightly so as to show it off to the best advantage, it seemed to bathe her whole hand in dazzling light, with the least turn. Of all the diamonds Mr. Multimill has "prospected," as they call it, surely that must be the finest.

It was while we were smoking that I thought I would show I had my own ideas about her engagement, and her flirtation with Norton Vavasour; but I'd better have left it alone. In her flippant, inconsequent way, she proves herself more than a match for any girl who is foolish enough to try to administer a covert reproof.

"I hope you won't mind my saying so, Blanche," I began, "now you've made your choice, but d'you know, I quite

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thought you would marry the original of that photo that has the place of honour on your mantelpiece — Mr. Norton Vavasour.”

She puffed a cloud of smoke into the air as she lay back in her chair, and then she looked at me. “What a fine girl you are, Mabel Frothingly, for six years old!” She took another whiff of her cigarette, and blew out another cloud of smoke, in a way I never *can* get hold of, before she went on: “About five-foot-six, I should say, and quite womanly-looking! And yet you can’t long have passed your sixth birthday. That last remark of yours proves it. Norty and I marry? On what? We’re both beggars, and beggars with a million wants, which are the worst and most miserable kind of beggars. ‘Love in a Cottage,’ eh? No, my dear; that cottage grew moss-grown and then tumbled down long, long ago. Nowadays it’s Dislike in a Desirable Family Mansion.”

She is quite as flippant and callous as I suspected; and when she guessed that I was thinking how unworthy she was to be *his* sister, she hit the truth pretty closely.

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I am quite sure he is far more earnest and has a great deal more heart than she.

He was at the Flummery's last night, and we sat out ever so many dances. I feel quite sure that he loves me, and will tell me so before I leave town. He is to be at the Tresyllyans' wind-up-of-the-season dance the night before Goodwood. I told him I should be there too.

Saturday, July 28th. — A very strange and distressing thing has happened. I accompanied my uncle in his drive this afternoon. He looked ill and seemed weak. He is making a very slow recovery from the operation. When we got back, he was made comfortable on the sofa in his room, and then sent Bates away. I was about to leave him also, when he said, "Stay, Mabel, I wish to speak to you. Come and sit by the sofa, and first see that the door is shut."

I did as he told me, and after I had been sitting by the sofa a few moments, wondering what he was going to say, he spoke:

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"I have heard to-day, Mabel, that you are receiving attentions from a son of Lord Fewacres, Rollo de Vere, and encouraging them. Is it true?"

I felt very much embarrassed, and, I suppose, looked so. I did not know what to answer. Uncle looked a little stern, as he went on: "I have been an invalid, and you have had to look to friends to chaperon you; I have been getting out of touch with your daily life and pursuits. But you owe it to me, Mabel, to be perfectly frank in your account of all you do and those you meet."

"Yes, Uncle," I said.

"Since you have lived with me as my adopted child, you have always been a good, dutiful girl, and, as I believe, truthful. I ask you, then, is it true that this young de Vere has paid you particular attentions, and you have encouraged him?"

"We met at a good many houses this season," I said falteringly. I began to think Uncle had heard some of those stories Lady Tattleton tells of Rollo. "I have danced with him a good many times."

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"There has been no talk of love between you?"

"No, Uncle," I said. I could say it truthfully, for though it very nearly came to that last night, it did not quite come.

"Only a ballroom flirtation then?" he said. "Don't let it become anything more. My adopted child and heiress must not think seriously of one of the de Veres."

I was silent for a moment, and then I ventured to say: "Am I not to know why, Uncle?"

He looked very sternly at me. Uncle is a good, *good* man, I know, but nobody can look more fearful than he does sometimes.

"That seems to me a peculiar and unnecessary question, Mabel," he said. "I do not forbid you to meet these people as acquaintances, for while you mix in society you must do that. But I do not wish them to become more than acquaintances. I should have thought your own observation and your correct notions would have told you why. Lord Fewacres' family belong to and represent a set that I dislike,

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and that I do not wish you to identify yourself with."

I felt too timid, and too much agitated, to say more than "Yes, Uncle."

"You have a wide choice," he went on, "and have shown yourself up to now a quiet, steady, sensible girl, not easily flattered or impressed, and not given to flirtation. I have been very well satisfied with you. When you marry, I should wish you to give your hand to one who will make a worthy use of the fortune you will bring him. If he is of high position, why, so much the better; but character comes first."

I know whom he was hinting at, the Earl of Pimlico, a middle-aged widower, lame, literary, and learned.

"I do not force your inclinations," continued Uncle, "though I think you know where I should like to see them turn. But with regard to Rollo de Vere I speak firmly. From every point of view such a connection would be distasteful to me."

"They are a very ancient family, Uncle,"

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I dared to put in, "and are quite among the leading families in society."

He waved his hand angrily, and looked terrible again. "Am I to understand, Mabel, from your attitude, that you really have encouraged this young man?"

I got frightened once more. "No, no, Uncle," I said.

"I am aware they are an ancient family," he said, more quietly; "but they are greatly impoverished, and this young man Rollo is the younger son. From a worldly point of view alone he is not what I should wish; but that is a secondary consideration. Both Lord Fewacres' sons have what I consider bad reputations. I should be sorry, too, to see you intimate with the eldest daughter, who, from all I hear, is a leader in the fast, reckless set."

I do not altogether disagree with what Uncle says of some of the *rest* of the family. But Lady Fewacres is nice, and Rollo, I'm quite sure, is different from his sister and the others. The stories about Rollo are all made up by women like Lady Tatletton, who want to set my uncle and me

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against him. I ventured to say I thought she spread a great deal of scandal. He waved his hand angrily again. "I know nothing of what she says. I do not found my opinions on the gossip of women. Your position, Mabel, as my heiress, has been an exceptional one, and hitherto you have filled it well. You have, I know, refused many offers of marriage. I never thought you one of the silly misses to be caught by a handsome face."

"I hope I am not, Uncle," I said.

"I hope you are not," he repeated grimly. "But I have thought it well to give you a warning, and at the same time to give you a hint, my child, that you may receive an offer in the future that I should not wish dismissed so summarily as former ones. You can leave me now, I am tired."

So I left him. My brain is in a whirl; my heart is bursting. Is my happiness, indeed, to be sacrificed? For I feel now that my happiness is bound up in Rollo de Vere, and his in me.

Up to now, I have always imagined that, so long as I married into a good

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family, Uncle would put no constraint on my choice. But then, I've never thought much about marrying till lately, since I met Rollo. He is not what Uncle thinks; he is different from the other de Veres. He is good and noble, and only wants some one to love him and take care of him to be quite a *pattern*, I am sure. It's not just — it's not fair of Uncle. He talks of my not being "caught by a handsome face." What does he expect me to be caught by, an *ugly* one, like Lord Pimlico's? It is *his* offer that I am to give consideration to, when it comes. Uncle is — no, I am a wicked girl to think hard things of Uncle, considering all he has been to me. But oh! I am very unhappy! Uncle little guesses how far it has gone, and that Rollo is really on the brink of an offer.

Monday Night (or, rather, Tuesday Morning). — Just returned from the Tre-syllians' wind-up-of-the-season dance. The noisy set that Uncle disapproves of were there in force. While, led by Blanche de

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Vere and Norton Vavasour (who invented it, I believe), they were doing that new dance, "Never Say Die," which is really nothing but an uproarious romp. I sat out. I knew Uncle would not wish me to join in it. Rollo did not care for it either, and came and sat with me. I could not prevent him, and almost before I knew what was happening, he had asked me to be his wife. I was dreadfully agitated, and couldn't help crying a little. He was so distressed; but he made me own how dear he is to me. And then I found myself telling him all about Uncle's warning and the obstacle there is between us; but he refuses to consider it an obstacle. He says it is only a sick man's fancy; that if we love each other that is everything; and that if we cannot be engaged openly, we must be engaged secretly. I told him how Uncle favours the idea of Lord Pimlico, and I couldn't help crying again. I said that, even if there were no one else, I should be miserable if I had to take any one who is middle-aged and wears glasses, and limps, and talks about such dry, un-



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interesting things, and writes dreadful sonnets that nobody can read. He looked so handsome and so kind while he listened, I never loved him so much.

Uncle called me quiet and steady, and I believe I am. I have not frittered away my heart in flirtations; but when my time came, I gave it whole and for ever. He is my first and only Love. I cannot give him up.

IX

SCHOLASTIC DISSIPATIONS — A SCHOLASTIC REBUKE AND DISMISSAL

Amy Robinson's Diary.

June 28th. — On Saturday morning the Head, all we teachers, the boarders, and a selection of the day-girls, went over to Dulchester to a meeting at which a statue of the late Miss Binnie was unveiled, in the lecture-room of the Young Women's Improvement Institute. Several other schools were there, and the room was quite crowded. Miss Stone and the other head mistresses present were on the platform; and there were some clergymen, and a suffragan-bishop, which, I fancy, is a sort of imitation bishop. It was altogether rather a grand affair, and quite a number of distinguished people sent letters saying they couldn't come. A great many speeches

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were made, all praising the late Miss Binnie, and saying what a great work she had done; how she was a pioneer among women; how it was in a great measure owing to her and others like her that women had begun "to come into their intellectual kingdom." I forget how many hundreds of girls they said had passed through her hands in the course of her career as a head mistress; but a large number of them, we were told, had been very successful, and were now "prosperous and happy women with schools of their own."

The statue was unveiled by a former favourite pupil of Miss Binnie's, Miss Dagg, Doctor of Science, a tall, thin woman, wearing her doctor's robes and a college cap. She had a deep voice, and spoke in short, abrupt sentences. She said Miss Binnie was what every woman ought to try to be—that she had helped to bring her sisters out of bondage—that her works would follow her, and that her pupils rose up and called her blessed. Then the statue was unveiled. It was standing, an

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open book in its hand; it was supposed to be teaching a class. Its hair was done in stone plaits on the back of its head, and it had a stone flounce on its dress. I thought it rather fearful-looking. I felt quite out of tune with the occasion and my surroundings. To me, such a life as Miss Binnie's — all school, and system, and "pioneering" — to be commemorated after its close by a fearful statue with stone plaits on its head and a stone flounce on its dress, seems less to be desired than that of the poorest old beggar-woman who sells matches in the street, and who was young and happy once.

On the journey back the Head talked to the elder teachers of the afternoon function. She spoke of the late Miss Binnie as "an illustrious teacher, and brilliant example of pedagogy" — I never heard that word before, but it certainly suits the statue! — "and that she well deserved the splendid memorial unveiled that day."

July 11th. — The school term draws towards an end. To-day we had our Dis-

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tribution of Prizes in the Gymnasium, and a garden-party.

The Mayoress of Clifgate gave the prizes. I wonder what she thought of her own two girls, as they came up to receive the prizes the Head takes good care they shall have. They are certainly about the plainest girls in the school, and looked dreadfully vulgar in their bright green muslins, and hats loaded with flowers. The hall was quite full of relatives and friends of the day-scholars. The Head was in brown silk, and looked bony and severe; though she just managed to give an awful kind of smile when little Mr. Simpkins, who was among the company on the platform, called for three cheers for her.

The teachers all had new dresses, which they had kept secret from each other till the great day. My good Miss Pickering, the nicest of them by a long way, was in green silk, with a white lace scarf and toque; very unbecoming to her, with that short, stout figure, and complexion that feels the heat so fearfully. She had new

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shoes with pointed toes, that, she told me, hurt her a good deal.

Miss Bunce looked horrid in a flowered muslin, with a babyish little hat, and a frilled lace and muslin sash, that did not go at all well with such features and such an expression as hers. Her slip-skirt wasn't near long enough, and a great deal of her ankles showed through; but no one liked to tell her of it, she has such a vindictive temper.

Miss Jennings, the quiet, rather crushed little person who has lately come as assistant Latin and English mistress under Miss Pickering, was in white muslin, and had such an enormous, theatrical-looking hat, and so much powder on her face, that the Head spoke to her, said she must modify her hat and make some alteration in her appearance — and she cried.

I wore cream voile, with touches of blue velvet about it (I got a dozen yards of blue ribbon velvet, quite a bargain, at the Clifgate Bon Marché), and a wide-brimmed white hat, with some of the blue velvet and some lace on it.

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Ah, they none of them knew, these poor teachers, with nothing but school to think of and live for, *why* I chose blue! It was because *he* said a short time ago, when I had a blue dress on, "Blue is my little girl's colour. She would look lovely in *any* colour, but she is loveliest of all in blue!" The Distribution and the Garden-party, that they all look forward to and think so much of, and talk about for long afterwards, how poor and petty it all seemed to me! I no longer feel irritable and unhappy; disliking the teachers, afraid of the Head, hating my narrow, monotonous life, with its classes of dull, drawling, little girls, and their hapless English dictation and tangled sums; and the *One*, two, three, four, *One*, two, three, four, of the junior piano practice in the afternoon. None of it can hurt me and crush me now. I dwell apart in a bright world of my own, a world *he* has made for me.

After the Distribution and the speeches came the Garden-party. Things did not go altogether smoothly. Strawberries and cream formed, of course, the most *recherché*

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part of the refreshments, and the teachers were not expected to take any. But, in spite of that, the supply of cream ran short, and when some of the parents the Head thinks *most* of asked for strawberries and cream, they could only have the strawberries.

Then a Glee Party had been engaged from Dulchester to sing from time to time on the lawn; and one of their glees was most unsuitable for singing at a distribution at a girls' school. It was all about love and kisses. The teachers looked frightened; the Head was furious; the girls tittered; and the parents looked surprised. The Glee Party were informed of their mistake, and, hurriedly ending the performance that had given offence, they substituted a perfectly harmless and suitable one: "Come, sister, come, and gather sweet flowers."

Among the small sprinkling of brothers permitted to come to these select parties was Mr. Percy Simpkins. He had on *his* notion of garden-party dress, and looked, as he always does, a dreadful little cad.

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Once, I dare say, I might not have objected to his following me about as he did and talking; *once* I might not have found him so unendurable; but now that I have Some-one Else to compare him with, he really seems hardly fit to speak to.

Among other things he asked me if I don't ever walk on the Pier? Because, he said, he should be so pleased to meet me there. Would I go and wait at the entrance of the Pier on Thursday evening about six? and he would see if he could come. I was not to go *on* the Pier and wait, for he might not be able to come, and it would be a pity if I paid twopence, and then was *disappointed!* Besides, he *meant to pay for both of us*. Finding me not disposed to look kindly on this plan, he began complimenting me on my dress and hat, and added: "I wonder, Miss Robinson, that you *dared* to make yourself look so charming, living among a set of old cats of teachers, as you do; for you'd be sure to get all the attentions from the few gentlemen that come to these school set-outs. No wonder you're afraid

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to come on the Pier. I forgot for the moment that you were a teacher in a school, when I arst you; and I'm sure every one *would* forget it who looked at you, Miss Robinson."

Finding me unresponsive to this also, he grew piqued; said he was "afraid I was already getting hold of some of the ways of the old cats, my fellow-teachers," and went off in a huff, to bestow his "attentions" on one of the elder girls, a friend of his sister; the said "attentions" being received with something like ecstasy.

Miss Bunce looked at me from beneath her youthful frilled hat with malicious triumph. Miss Pickering found an opportunity to whisper, with real sympathy, "I'm afraid you've lost your beau!"

July 16th. — He has told me plainly that he loves me. I suppose I may consider myself engaged to him now. He has said nothing about giving me a ring, but, of course, he knows, as I refused the little bangle, that I dare not accept anything of that kind, situated as I am.

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It was last evening. I went for one of my long walks, and met him at the usual place. I had read his name that day in the Society Column of *Daily Thrills* as a guest at a splendid ball in town. And as we walked along I said I wondered he thought it worth while coming to walk with me after being at such a grand ball the night before.

He laughed and snapped his fingers. "So much for balls!" he said, "They're a weariness of the flesh." And then he bent down, and looked into my face — No, I cannot write it all down with prosaic ink on cold, white paper, it is far too sweet and dear! I must keep it for my thoughts and my memory alone.

July 20th. — The crisis that I have long feared (though now that he has spoken out so plainly I do not see why I should fear it so much) came to-day. They have found out about my meeting him. It was Miss Bunce, I feel quite sure, who found it out and told the rest. Those dreadful little eyes of hers are only *made* for spying.

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No doubt she has followed me at a distance and hidden herself somewhere (she is so small and thin, it would be easy) and watched me meet him. But it matters not *how* it came about. It *has* come about, and my career as an assistant-teacher and overlooker of the junior music practice at "Sea View House High-class School for Girls" is over.

It was near four o'clock this afternoon, just as I was in the thick of *One*, two, three, four, *One*, two, three, four, and the four practising pianos in the big class-room, with two girls at each, playing *ensemble* exercises were enough to drive any one mad, that Miss Jennings, looking rather strange, came in and said, "The Head wishes to speak to you in her office, Miss Robinson, when the practice is over." The practice was soon over, and I went in a rather tremulous state towards the office. On the way I encountered Miss Jennings, who had evidently waited for me.

"I do hope there's nothing wrong," she whispered, taking my hand; "but I'm afraid there is. They oughtn't to be hard

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on you. You're young, my dear, and so very pretty." She looked at me wistfully, and sighed, and then suddenly she kissed me and hurried away.

I was very much astonished. Except for the incident of the large conspicuous hat and the powder on her face at the Distribution and Garden-party, she has seemed quite a nonentity. But it is evident she has a heart. So much the worse for her, I'm afraid, being a school teacher.

I went into the office. The Head was there alone, sitting at her big desk dressed in her usual grey alpaca, and wearing her gold-rimmed folders. Severe as I have always thought her expression, I have never seen it *half* so severe as when she looked up from the half-yearly Reports lying before her, to which she was putting her signature. She pointed to a chair without a word when I had shut the door. And then there was a deadly pause. I did not feel so frightfully agitated as I should have expected, but more inclined to be desperate and reckless.

"Miss Robinson, I have been shocked

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and amazed to hear that you, a junior teacher in Sea View House School — you, who, in your humble way, should be a guide and an example to the girls — have formed a clandestine acquaintance with an officer of the garrison here, and have been in the habit of meeting and walking with him. This is what has been told me, Miss Robinson. I wait for you to deny the story.”

I could not meet her severe gaze any longer, so I looked down at the ground. I said nothing.

“You *cannot* deny it,” she went on icily. “It is true, then — all that has been charged against you by Miss ——” she stopped, and I supplied the name — “Bunce,” though astonished at my own hardihood all the time.

She waved her hand angrily. “The name of my informant is of no importance. Are you aware that your disgraceful conduct reflects on the *school*, reflects on *me* as the Head-mistress?”

“I have not behaved disgracefully, Miss Stone,” I said meekly.

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“ You have behaved *so* disgracefully — you, a resident junior teacher in a girls’ school, forming a clandestine military acquaintance in a garrison town, conduct for which I should instantly dismiss a kitchen-maid — that, in justice to the pupils, their parents, and myself, I cannot suffer you to remain in Sea View House another day. I gave you a post in my school because your late father had been a pains-taking and respected music-master here, but I may say now that, during the time you have been with me, I have always thought that neither your manners nor appearance were what I should wish in a resident teacher in my school.”

I rose and said, my voice trembling a good deal, “ You wish me to leave at once — to-day ? ”

“ I have no alternative but to dismiss you at once,” she said in her calm, deadly tone. “ But I am unwilling to burden my conscience on your account by sending a young woman of such proclivities, and a friendless orphan, out into the world she is evidently so unfit to make her way

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in; so I have written to a friend of mine, the Superintendent of a Home for Teachers at Holloway, London, and have stated the case to her fully. You will have a safe asylum with strict supervision at the Home for almost a nominal charge till you can find other employment. Your salary to the end of the expiring term will be paid you. No doubt you have saved something, though I fear not to the extent a prudent, well-conducted young woman would have saved. And let me hope that what has occurred here will be a warning to you, and that in the next post you secure you will see the necessity for strictly circumspect behaviour. As to my giving you permission to refer to me in your next employment, I must first see the report Miss Higgins gives of you at the Home."

But I had heard enough by this time.

"I don't think the Home for Teachers would suit me as a residence," I said, plucking up some spirit. "And I don't think I shall have to ask you to speak for me. I am engaged to be married."

"Engaged to be married!" she echoed

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with icy incredulity. "You are trying to deceive me, or else you are egregiously deceived yourself. Such conduct as yours, let me tell you, if you are really such a simpleton to believe what you are saying, does not end in marriage."

"Such conduct as mine!" I said, gathering more and more spirit. "I have done nothing worthy of being called conduct! Because one is a teacher in a school, it does not follow that one has taken the black veil, has taken vows cutting one off from one's kind. I am engaged to be married and should soon have given you notice myself."

And then I left the office, and now I have packed up my few things, received my little bit of salary, drawn my insignificant savings from the post-office, and am really leaving. I shall go to Dulchester and take a little lodging there first, while I think what to do next. Like the heroines of the stories I have liked best, I am thrown on the world, with only love to count upon. But that is *everything*. He loves me and I am engaged to him. It

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may be a very good thing that things have turned as they have, for when he finds I am thrown on the world for *his* sake, I expect we shall be married all the sooner.

And *then* I can scorn Sea View House, and the Head, and all the teachers, with their narrow lives, and their spying on each other, and their tattling — all except Miss Pickering; she has always been my friend in her way — and poor Miss Jennings. I won't scorn *them*.

X

“BADS” AND PLACES WHERE THEY CURE — AN ANGLO - AMERICAN CONTEST

Blanche's Diary.

Irgendeinbad, August 15th. — Here I am living the simple life, while the Powers that be are doing a cure, though it seems to me that they only “change the place and keep the pain,” as Dr. Johnson said — or was it Keats? I always mix up those two writers, owing, I suppose, to their both being medical men.

This place, like every other Kurort, would be immensely improved by the removal of all the invalids, especially those who are here for “errors of diet” (Harley Street for over-eating), with their early hours and general aggravation.

We who aren't doing any sort of cure get through the days with the help of the

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Lustgarten, the Spaziergang, the Casino, and motor-trips into the country round. Fritz Hummel, the waltz-man, who is here conducting his famous band, and is distinctly inclined to be a darling, helps us to *kill* time by *beating* it vigorously twice a day in the Lustgarten. Josiah Multimill *actually* wanted to come here too. The idea! No, indeed! This child's going to have her freedom, *at least* till she's married, and *then* she's going to have it too! I've a perfectly lovely way of managing him, and it wants some doing, for I find he keeps a temper seven feet high. Whenever he wants to do anything that it doesn't suit me he *should* do, I simply say calmly, "It *isn't* done."

I'm having a holiday from *being engaged* as well as from everything else, and, though I love my big solitaire *as a diamond*, I'm giving it a rest just now.

The Bosh Tresyllyans are here, but are almost useless for social purposes. Wee-Wee is suffering from cigarette-heart and motor-face, and is having the Spoofoheim treatment. She sits in a little cell, and

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is played upon with white and green rays, and she has to keep silent for hours, and mustn't be contradicted. Bosh has nervous indy and golf-ankle, and is taking volcanic mud-baths.

Among the latest arrivals is the Duchess of Clackmannan. The dear thing has been overdoing it simply *fearfully for months*, with her miracle-play, her *roman-à-clef*, her charity organizings in London, and her *exhaustive* articles on Tatting in *The Coronet*, which, illustrated by big photo-gravure plates, "Tatting by the Duchesses," have made quite a stir. (I hear, by the way, that the Duchess of Dunstable sent in such a *disgraceful* specimen bit that they couldn't reproduce it.)

Stella Clackmannan's cure is quite an arduous one. As well as having high frequency electric brain-baths to curb her imagination, she has to lie rigid for hours in a bright violet light, and she must never even *think* of anything that isn't *violet*. She has been followed here by that *ricky* Bullyon - Boundermere woman, who has confided to me that she is feeling "com-

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pletely run down" (the woman's in rude health, but thinks that bad form), and is doing "exactly the same cure as the dear Duchess."

Fluffy Mainwaring has *not* gone yachting to Norway with her husband after all. She is here, being treated for *bridge-brow*. Giddy St. Adrian, who says he has *polo-knee*, and has come for the *Schierkidding* treatment, is about with her as constantly as he used to be in London.

Meeting them both at the Casino last night, I said, "Why, Fluffy, I thought it was part of your cure to go to by-bye with the birds! What price your *bridge-brow*, my dear?"

"Oh, rats!" said Fluffy. "Quite a different set of facial muscles are used at baccarat!"

Prince Galoshkin is certainly *charmant comme il y en a peu!* Since we were introduced at Ascot last year, I've never met him till now; but he is perfectly devoted.

He occupies an entire wing of the Schloss-Gasthof, and has quite a fleet of motor-cars with him. He says he is wandering

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about "till the troubles in his unhappy country shall be suppressed." He talks quite beautifully of what *he* would do to stamp out discontent, and "put the lower classes in their proper place once for all." Oh, it *does* seem a shame that such a man as Prince Galoshkin should be kept away from his castles and estates by the rotten conduct of peasants, and students, and mujiks, with their risings, and Dumas, and things!

His English is excellent — not exactly broken, only a little *chipped* — and, as I told him yesterday, he is *almost* as well versed in the literature of my country as I am myself. He was so pleased. He is quite a philosopher, though not of the same kind as I *used* to think Norton Vavasour. Norty's views of life are more *mellow* — I don't say they're quite as *piquant*.

Fluffy was saying to-day that the Galoshkin jewels are about the finest in Europe.

There's no doubt I was a bit previous in saying Yes to Josiah Multimill, but

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it seemed the best thing I could do at the time. I'm very glad, however, that I decided to take a holiday from being engaged *here*, and that my engagement has been kept pretty close, and hasn't yet been announced in the *Morning Post*.

The Prince wants me to take him the celebrated walk through the Fichtenallee and round the Steilberg to the Tiefefbrunnen, and show him the famous view. I tell him all he has to do is to follow the errors-of-diet people, who are sent there in a drove at six every morning. But he says no, he wants *me* to show him the way, and will have nothing to do with the early-morning drove. He is wise in that, for we are all agreed that the errors-of-diet people are *never* quite *safe* (especially the Duchess of Dunstable), and that, as the time approaches for their *very* simple and *rather scanty* meals, they are *positively dangerous*.

Apropos of the e.-o.-d. people never being allowed to eat after seven in the evening, Bosh Tresyllyan says he shall write a drama, comparing their habits here and in London, and call it *Man and*

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Supper-Man, and cut out Mr. Bernard Shaw.

The Prince is really great fun. There is in him that delicious mixture of chivalrous courtesy and potential ferocity that makes Russians quite irresistible. *Grattez le Russe, et vous trouvez le Tartare*; I remembered this saying, and thought I would like to test its truth. So yesterday afternoon when he came, as usual, to take possession of the chair next mine in the Lustgarten, I managed that he should find Giddy St. Adrian there before him, and took care that Giddy and I should be having such a ripping joke together that I was unconscious of anything or any one in the place. (As well as being an interesting little experiment, it's good policy to let him see that he can't monopolize me altogether.) Presently I stole a look, to see how my treatment was working, and found that I had indeed *gratté'd* the *Russe* and *trouvé'd* the *Tartare*! A thunder-cloud isn't in it with him, and he was looking *knouts* at poor Giddy, while Fluffy Mainwaring was looking *hat-*

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pins at me for taking possession of Giddy.

In the evening at the Casino I took care to *smooth* the *Russe*, and leave the *Tartare* hidden, and he was more devoted than ever.

Saturday, August 18th. — I'd such a ripping set-to with a Yankee girl to-day. I must try to remember it word for word. Bosh and Wee-Wee took a day off from their treatment, and they and Prince Galoshkin and I motored over to Krankenbad. It's much the same at Irgendeinbad, only on a smaller scale; the same errors-of-diet people being sent in droves to do all their year's walking in a few days; the same invalids put out to simmer in the sun.

We dined at a hotel there — a primitive affair with a long, old-fashioned *table d'hôte*. Opposite me at table was a Yankee girl, pretty in a rather aggressive way, and very conscious of being the smart, brainy, independent Miss Stars-and-Stripes, who'll make us all sit up, and show us what a young woman *ought* to be.

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She took a survey of our party, and after honouring me with a particularly long stare, remarked *sotto voce* (and not very *sotto*) to the woman sitting by her, "Are those eye-brows natural, I wonder?"

Well, I was out on the razzle-dazzle, and I felt mischievous, and I did a thing I shouldn't have done elsewhere. I weighed in with, "Yes, my eye-brows are quite natural, Miss Yankee; as natural as *your* cheek!"

A little colour came into her face as she looked at me across the table, but her "That so?" was drawled coolly enough, and presently she added, "I guess you're pretty smart for a Britisher."

"I guess not," said I; "and I guess I don't like compliments at the expense of my country."

"That so? Well, you'll have to wait *some*, I calculate, before your *country* gets a compliment for smartness! For of all slow-going old places, that little islet of yours limps in last. Looks like we're going to have an international struggle, you and I, don't it?"

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"I've no objection," said I. "As Shakespeare says, 'I will lay on for Tusculum, and lay thou on for Rome.'"

"Does Shakespeare say that?" she asked. "Don't seem to remember it, anyway!"

"I dare say not," said I, with dignity; "but you must allow that *I'm* the best authority on my own countryman's work."

"But that's just what you Britishers aren't," she said. "It's up to *us* to appreciate and understand your great writers best. Look at Charles Dickens! Is *he* appreciated and understood in England as much as he is in the States?"

"He's understood and appreciated by the class he wrote for," I said.

As a matter of fact I'm not very well up in Dickens; indeed, I think *Adam Bede* is the only one of his that I've even looked into. So I struck off with, "You call us slow. That's because you don't understand us. We're content with doing things, and not talking about them. We've never studied bragging as a fine art."

"But, say," she chipped in, "won't you

everyday cute phrases and
your talk and fancy yours
haven't we shown you the
London Tube, and managed
to run theatres, and news
stores? And haven't we the
sewing-machine, and the
and the typewriter, and the
the Land knows what besides.

"Those are only *little*
"and you got the idea of
from us. I'm told that many
called Americanisms are
provincial English. And that
you only altered and perhaps
little on what *we* found out
it an Englishman, Watt, was
at a kettle till he invented

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coveries are ours. And we invented railways, and steamboats, and balloons; so we needn't grudge you your Edison and his sewing-machines."

"*Edison — and sewing-machines!*" she shrieked.

"Oh, well," I said. "No, that was Singer, wasn't it, and Edison the other things? But never mind. What I have to say is this. You mustn't think, because we let you talk and show off, that we agree with your estimate of yourselves. It's not so; only we find arguing a bore, so we humour you and let you run on. I remember when I was a wee kiddy, I was brought down one evening after dinner, and stood on the table, where they were sitting at dessert, in my white frock and blue shoes and sash. Not satisfied unless all eyes were fixed on me, I gave a small jump and yelled out, 'On'y nooka me!' And it's just so with your country to-day. It's the spoilt kiddy yelling out to the grown-up nations, 'On'y nooka me!'"

Bosh and Wee-Wee laughed and applauded like good 'uns, and so did Prince

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Galoshkin, though I don't think he understood.

The middle-aged party sitting by my antagonist seemed about to take part in the fray, but the girl stopped her with, "Now, mamma, don't *you* butt in; I can settle Miss Britisher alone, I reckon!"

"That's all right," said I, for Wee-Wee, too, had shown symptoms of taking a hand. "All we ask of our friends is to keep the ring — Queensberry Rules, four-ounce gloves;" and I went on with my dinner calmly.

Miss Yankee was getting a bit blown, and didn't always come up smiling.

"You aren't going to best me," she said, "though I own you're smart for a Britisher. Yours may have been a great country once, way back before the *Mayflower* sailed and took away all the best ones. But it's played out now, just about. You look to us for notions; you imitate us in a thousand ways; and we say, over home, that you'll end by imitating us in the biggest thing of all, and will set up a Republic on the lines of ours."

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“ No; *there* you make a mistake,” I said. “ It’ll be just the other way round, I think. You’re gone on titles, every one of you, and you’re getting sick of pretensions founded on nothing better than *Mayflower* and dollars (and, by the way, from the number of you that claim to have had ancestors in that *Mayflower*, she must have been as big as the latest Atlantic monster)! No; it’s not *we* who are going to have a Republic, it’s *you* who are going to have a Monarchy. One of these days you’ll have a great, big, gorgeous crown made (you’ll take care that there are more jewels in it than in any crown extant), and you’ll clap it on the head of a popular President, and you’ll all set up a yell of ‘ Long live King Jabez K. Vanhustler the First,’ or something of that kind, and then you’ll fake up a nobility out of pork, and oil, and Tammany — *et vous v’là, tout-à-fait comme il faut!* ”

Well, it was good fun. We gave each other some hard knocks; but I didn’t lose my temper for a moment, and if she lost hers, she soon found it again. Bosh and

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Wee-Wee and the Prince said it was a victory for me; but I don't know about that. She put up a good fight. Myself, I think it was by way of being a drawn battle. As we were going out to the Prince's car later, I was amused to hear a rather nice boy (her brother, I fancy) say to my Yankee girl, as they stood in the balcony, "Say, Edna, d'you know who they are, that crowd? That's Sir Lyonel Tresyllyan, baronet, and Lady Genevieve Tresyllyan, and the girl you were having spats with at dinner is the Hon. Miss de Vere, Lord Fewacres' daughter, and the tall cuss with the feet and the beard is his Highness Prince Galoshkin."

I just caught the rejoinder of my antagonist, "My! you don't say!"

XI

ENGAGED TWO - DEEP — A “ NEW ” HOST
AND HOSTESS — “ THE POOR PRINCE ! ”

Blanche's Diary continued.

Wednesday, August 22nd. — The Prince has been teasing me for a whole week to take him the famous walk to the Tiefebrunnen. I held off as long as I judged prudent, and yesterday I took him. What I expected to happen, has happened. He proposed, and, *of course*, I have accepted him. I shall have one of the finest positions in Europe. It isn't likely I should let that nonsense with Josiah Multimill stand in the way. I was a fool to say Yes to him, and yet I can't altogether blame myself. He had what is most important of *all*. But the Prince has that — and everything else. His estates are

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almost as large as the whole of England, and he owns heaps of mines. I don't exactly know what's got out of them; but whatever it is, it makes him one of the richest men in the world. Then, for a town house, I shall have the Galoshkin Palace in the Nevsky, one of the show-places of Petersburg. He's devoted and adoring, with a touch of latent savageness that I find quite nice. He wanted to come in state to ask my hand of the Powers that be, but I've persuaded him to let me keep our little secret for a time. I've put it on the score of *romance* — not letting the world know of our happiness yet, and so on. But in reality I must have time to look round and see how I'll manage, for I'm in a bit of a hole.

The Prince has to go to Russia on business in a few days, and will be there some weeks. I've promised him that when he returns he shall demand my hand formally, and the engagement shall be publicly announced.

I'm so thankful that I kept the Multi-mill affair pretty close; that I haven't

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breathed a word about it here, and have kept that diamond out of sight. Fluffy has asked me about Josiah Multimill once or twice, but I've given her no satisfaction.

I must think out a letter to him before the Prince returns. I shall speak of the engagement as merely a *provisional* one (that's a very good thought), and I shall say I've thought things over, *as we agreed*, and have come to the conclusion *regretfully* that we do not suit each other, and that it will be best for the happiness of both, and so on (I don't know how I shall finish that bit off); but that I hope we shall remain friends, and, if he likes, will keep the solitaire diamond (I really don't think I can part with it!) as a *friend's gift*.

And then, when I've disposed of *him*, I shall be able to enjoy the prospect of being Princess Galoshkin. As the Prince's wife I shall have a high position at Court, and I'll make my mark in Petersburg society, that I vow! What jewels, and furs, and frocks I'll have! And what parties I'll give!

Monday, August 27th. — Vladimir is

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gone. He will be gone a month, he's afraid; but he means to get through his business as quickly as ever he can. We said our own particular farewells in the course of our walk yesterday. And his *public* adieus were also most *impressive*. That is Vladimir's word altogether — *impressive*. I will own here that to be impressive and to be a bore are, in my eyes, much the same thing. But the Prince has so many things to set off against his impressiveness, that I must put up with it.

His devotion was so conspicuous, and his *impressiveness* so marked the last few days, that I've wondered if people suspected anything. No, I don't suppose they suspected anything *serious*. Irgeindeinbad is such a place for temporary devotions and airs of proprietorship, that cease with the "cure."

I think I shall make him cut off that beard when I'm Princess Galoshkin. I do abominate beards! Fancy how any good-looking man would be spoiled by one! Norty Vavasour, for instance. But perhaps the Prince would be even uglier

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without a beard than with one. And, Russia being such a freezy place, I dare say he'd catch cold, and then say it was my fault. So let him keep his horrid, great tippet of a beard.

He is going to have the famous Galoshkin Sapphire, that is called in Russian "The Roof of Heaven," set in the front of my crown. He says it will never have been so worthily worn, for "The Roof of Heaven" is only in its right place when it's worn by an *angel*! He took a long time to say all this, and I felt like yawning before he'd done.

Battleaxe Towers, Monday, September 10th. — A fortnight since I parted from the Prince. I've had a letter from him, a bit *impressive* and high-flown, not to say prosy, written in rather funny English, helped out with French. It has, however, one distinctly delicious touch. He says he's hurrying through his business, and will then "fly back to his elegant and incomparable Blanche." He adds: "I trust this is properly expressed, but am

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not quite all sure. I fear at times I do write *wicked English!*" The way he signs himself, "*Je reste à tes pieds, Reine de mon cœur,*" is rather nice. I don't know whether he meant a sort of pun on *heart* and *court*; but it's not likely. He's not a *punny* man.

I've had one or two letters from Josiah Multimill, full of "longing to see my sweet Blanche again" — "Please write very often, Dearest, and let me know all you are doing."

Poor man! he little thinks what sort of letter he'll get soon. And it must be *very* soon now. I'm still polishing it up and making alterations in it.

What a wretch some of the serious ones would think me! By the way, if *marrying* two people at once is *bigamy*, what is *being engaged* to two at once, I wonder? *Smallamy*? How my dear old Daphne Verinder would shake her head and say, "I couldn't have believed, Blanche, that even *you* would do such things!"

But it's easy to preach, and it's easy to shake your head — unless you

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happen to have on a Valérie picture-hat.

It's a funny thing that I should find myself staying here with these Bullyon-Boundermere people. But Babs and her husband have engineered the shoot and have got together quite a nice crowd. Several of them have never spoken to their host and hostess before, and don't seem in any hurry to do so now. The Clackmannans have been persuaded to come, and among others here are Lord Hurlingham, Hughie Mashem, Dolly de Lacy and his brother, Piggy, Bosh Treslyan, the Croppy Vavasours, and Norty of that ilk.

I *have* to go back to something of the old footing with the latter. It's *a great deal too much trouble* to keep up even the most *righteous* indignation and *well-merited* scorn for many weeks. I've told Norty this quite plainly, and he said it's the *Zeitgeist*, and that *he* feels it too.

As his fiancée, Aunt Goldmont, is still at Aix, and Josiah Multimill is seeing after his recent purchase, Broadlands, Bucks —

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how little he thinks he'll have to live in it alone, or find another chatelaine! — it's quite like old times.

My new shooting-dress is just as *chic* as they make 'em. None of your compromises! I'm one of those who can *honestly* wear threes in boots.

Babs and I have been out with the guns twice. I've not killed anything yet, but Norty says he's quite sure I shall soon. Certainly there *was* a bird to-day that Babs said had fallen to *her* gun, and that I fancied had fallen to *mine*. We were *quite* sweet about it before the men; but after we got back we said one or two little things to each other, and she was distinctly inclined to be *catty*. It's all blown over now, however. I can afford to forgive her and to be magnanimous, for our shooting-skirts have made it obvious to all and sundry that her feet are *quite* a size larger than mine.

And here's a scrap of philosophy for the use of the present age and future ages. (How I hate to think of future ages! How horrid that the people will be so much

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younger than we are!) I hear that some poky people are disquieting themselves over the question, "Ought women to go out with the guns?" Such drivel! As if it was a question of anything in the world but *feet* and *ankles*.

When you hear a woman say, "Oh, the men don't want *us* with them when they're shooting," or, "Oh, the dear, pretty birds! I'd be sorry to kill any of them," observe that woman closely, and you'll find Nature has been having a little joke with her about *ankles*, and that as to *feet*, she can't be comfortable in anything smaller than fives.

This place is so altered since I stayed here two years ago, before the Belfonts sold it, that I should hardly know it. Renovated and modernized to any extent, with lifts and electric everywhere.

The old Belfont ghost, no doubt, has quitted in disgust. It was a cavalier, with lace collar and love-lock complete, and used to appear in the picture gallery on a certain night in the year, when some one was killed or something, ages ago.

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Norty says that if the Bullyon-Bounder-mere people hear any whispers of a ghost being the thing, they'll have an electric one installed straight, and when you want it to "walk," you'll only have to press a button marked "Ghost."

It is certainly the *funniest* thing! Our so-called host and hostess have engaged the great Pierre, who was *chef* at the "Splendid," and we're all obsessed with the notion every night that we're dining at the Splen., or some other big restaurant. The other night, when something was brought to Lord Hurlingham, he called out, "Take that away, and bring me my usual so-and-so." And Norty says that he's quite sure he shall ask for his bill some evening. "Not that I could pay it though," he added. He's an *absurd* boy, but he *does* make things hum! Last night he and I got up an impromptu cotillion. In one of the figures, all the men pretended to be different sorts of animals, and we had to guess what sorts by the noises they made. We guessed all but Norty's — a queer, droning, monotonous noise. At

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last he had to tell us; it was "a *wild bore*, that is, not exactly *wild*, for it's kept in a kind of *cage* called a *Liberal Cabinet*!" We simply shrieked.

To-night he improvised a lovely toboggan for us, by opening out some screens over a flight of stairs, and we tobogganed till we were half dead. I'm afraid we destroyed the screens a good bit, especially a rather pretty black-and-gold one; but the Bullyon-Boundermere people laughed and said it didn't matter. I thought *he* looked a bit troubled though.

We wound up the evening with hide-and-seek in the passages. I found the loveliest and most impenetrable hidey-holes; but Norty's so horribly sharp, he always seemed to know where I was.

Bosh Tresyllyan heard some bad news from Wee-Wee to-day. After her cure, she went to Trouville, and she's lost her favourite diamond necklace, bathing. Bosh says it serves her right, and that, though he's all for a bathing-dress being as smart and snappy as poss., the woman who wears her *diamonds* with it deserves to lose 'em.

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A letter from home to-day. I'm to be married next month, October being the correct month for marriages arranged during the London season. And so I *shall* be married next month, *ma mère*, I dare say; but as to the *bridegroom*, there'll be a quick-change turn, and you'll be the first to congratulate me on the fact, and to give your blessing to your beloved and prudent child, her Highness the Princess Galoshkin.

Friday, Sept. 14th. — A letter from Rollo. The poor old boy is in a bit of a hole. His heiress is as much gone on him as ever, and since the Frothinglys went to Sir James's place in Middlesex, she's run up to town several times and met Rollo on the quiet. He popped some time ago, and she, though "owning her love," told him a very queer, absurd thing. It seems her uncle has warned her against having anything to do with our family, except in the ordinary way of society. *The idea!* Some of his own ale must have got into his head! A De Vere not good enough for a Froth-

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ingly! That's a little *too* steep. What price the Frothinglys at the time our Ancestor was helping the Conqueror on with his armour before the Battle of Hastings was fought? (I often wonder, by the way, how, with so many Ancestors messing about with that armour, the poor man ever got ready to fight!) Why, in *those* days the Frothinglys were serfs or thralls or something, and wore brass collars round their necks, and very likely went on all-fours!

Rollo says he would like to hear what I think, for he relies greatly on my *judgment* and *knowledge of things*. It is positively essential that he should secure the heiress, as his affairs are in an absolutely rotten state. He thinks this secret half-engagement very unsatisfactory, and not near so binding as a public one. Sir James is in wretched health, and he and Mabel are going to winter in the South. Rollo's afraid he'll lose her. Nothing more likely. Having fallen in love once, she'll do it again. Travelling abroad, Rollo faded into the background, she'll be giving her

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affections (being of a musical turn) to some ferocious-looking foreign fiddler, or perhaps to a popular pianist, with his hair down and a "marvellous finger." I shall write to Rollo to-day, and my advice will be that he secures Mabel and her millions *irrevocably* before she goes abroad, marrying her on the quiet, during one of those sly little jaunts of hers to town. (No one like your proper, orthodox young woman, with *principles*, and a fixed colour, for setting her pastors and masters at defiance when a love affair comes along!) From the accounts of Sir James, it's evident they won't have long to wait to come into their own, and announce their marriage.

Rollo winds up all his perplexities by saying he has "other worries too" that he can't enter into. I know what *that* means. I've had hints of it from the mater. The silly boy's got into an entanglement with some shopgirl, or barmaid, or something, down at Clifgate. What absurd creatures brothers are! How much better sisters manage! Look at Rollo and me, for instance. Here he is, struggling with all

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kinds of problems and getting into all sorts of scrapes, and coming to me for advice. Fancy *my* ever going to *him* for counsel!

Tuesday, Sept. 18th. — A *frightful* thing has happened. My poor Prince Galoshkin has been assassinated! All the papers are full of it. He was driving in Petersburg, and one of those horrible creatures who are always throwing bombs, threw one at him — I can't write about it — it's too awful!

Poor dear Vladimir! He was so devoted to me! All my dreams of being a leader at the Russian court and in Petersburg society, dashed to the ground! I never was so shocked and distressed. And yet I must pretend it's no more to me than to any of the rest of them here who are talking about it. When they ask, Didn't I meet him at Irgendeinbad? What sort of man was he? And was it true, as Someone told the Somebodys, that he was tremendously gone on me? I have to answer in quite a casual, don't-care sort

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of way. Of course it's a terrible effort, for my feelings are all to pieces.

How frightful to think that all those castles and immense estates, and the mines, and the Galoshkin Palace on the Nevsky, and the famous sapphire, "The Roof of Heaven," that really is *mine*, should go to a cousin!

But in the midst of all the shock and sorrow for my poor Prince, I can't help feeling thankful that I hadn't sent that letter to Josiah Multimill. It would have made no difference in poor Vladimir's fate, and what a position mine would have been, with the Prince gone and Josiah Multimill dismissed! I should have had to take back my words about sisters managing so much better than their brothers. But I held the letter back by a sort of *instinct*. Really, my prudence and far-sightedness are so *extreme*, that I'm reminded of a line of poetry I've read somewhere: — "A something — a something else — I tremble at myself, And in myself am lost."

As it is, no one knows anything, and



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I'm in just the same position as I was in before.

Oh, my poor, poor Prince! He ought to have had his hand read, or his horoscope cast, or something, before he took that fatal journey.

I leave here to-morrow, and go down into Bucks to stay with Bosh and Wee-Wee.

XII

A CHURCH BAZAAR AND A LOST LOVE- LETTER

Blanche's Diary continued.

Ashmore Park, Bucks, Friday, Sept. 21st. — I shall be very quiet while I stay here. After such a shock, I'm really fit for nothing. But I have to pretend to be cheerful and play up to the others. We had a glorious lark yesterday — that is, the others did, and I had to be a passive partaker in it. We all went to Dulchester Races. Bosh and Wee-Wee took their piano-organ and had an ice-cream cart, and they two and I dressed up as Italians, and called ourselves the "Spoofini Family," and did a roaring trade, though I had an aching heart all the time.

The crowd positively *poured* out their grimy pennies, and Bosh threw them all

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into a pail of water, for he said it was *literally* "filthy lucre."

We made quite a lot of money, and we threw it to the children in the villages we motored through on our way back. The people in the Enclosure came to have a look at us, and Popsy, Lady Ramsgate, who was with a party, put up her long-handled glasses and said, "Italians? I don't believe a word of it. That tall one's *immensely* like Blanche! It is Blanche!" And then they were all over us.

This place is only a few miles from Broadlands, which Josiah Multimill has bought, and which is to be our chief home in future. He's having it got up regardless, and is there himself superintending things. He's so delighted to have me within reach, and often takes Wee-Wee and me to see how the work is getting on. The house is Tudor or Georgian, I forget which, with modern additions, flower-gardens round, and quite a decent park beyond. Not a place any one need be ashamed of, though, of course, it seems a small concern when I think of the Ga-

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loshkin Castles, and the enormous estates, and the palace on the Nevsky. But this place has one great advantage. There are no bombs. My poor Prince! It's like a blow on the brain whenever I remember it. I've been thinking to-day that, if I'd become Princess Galoshkin and gone to Russia with Vladimir, those fearful creatures would have thrown things at me, too. How very awful!

There's to be the inevitable church bazaar here. Bosh and Wee-Wee are to lend their grounds for it, and we are all to be pressed into the service to help. I suppose I must put aside private feelings. The object is a *very* good one — to send out parasols to the women of the Lirripop Coast. I don't quite know where it is; but, anyhow, it's most frightfully sunny there, and so, of course, the poor things want parasols. In each parasol there'll be a little moral sentence printed in the Lirripop language, so that, as the Vicar says, the parasols will bring *light* as well as *shade* to the Lirripop Coast. Bosh says it's an idea that might be worked to advan-

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tage here at home, and that a few serious phrases — such as the eighth Commandment, for instance — printed inside *umbrellas* might prevent some of the *mistakes* that are made at clubs and places.

I'm to have a "Witch's Cave," and shall call myself "A Sibyl from the Land of Palms," and read hands and tell fortunes. I'm also to help at the Café Chantant and the Drink Bar. Apropos of the Drink Bar, a funny thing happened. The Bullyon-Boundermers have come South and are staying near here, and *she's* tried to be very pally with Wee-Wee and me. In return, we've pressed her into the service of the Lirripop Coast females, and made her provide several stalls outright.

"You must help in person, too, Mrs. Boundermere," said Wee-Wee, in her gentle, innocent way. "You must help sell the drinks. I'm sure you'd do it splendidly." The B.-B. laughed, but turned scarlet as she answered: "I don't know why you think I'd do it splendidly, Lady Genevieve. I've really had no experience at these bazaars."

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It was cruel of Wee-Wee, for rumour's thousand tongues say that Mrs. B.-B. was called to the Bar in her youth.

Monday, September 24th. — I begin to think my luck is turning, for a most vexing and odious thing happened this afternoon. I was in the big drawing-room alone, not doing anything in particular, when a servant brought me a letter. It had been sent to my home, sent on from there to Battleaxe Towers, and then sent down from there to Dulchester to the Bullyon-Boundermeres with their other letters, and they had sent it over by motor with a most effusive message.

It was from the poor Prince. I hardly know how I felt when I saw first the big G and the coronet on the envelope, for I didn't quite realize at the moment that it had been delayed a lot.

I opened and read it. It was written the morning of the day the tragedy happened, and was short but very *impressive* — poor dear! He spoke of “flying back on the wings of love to England to claim

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his sweet English bride in her own home ; ” and he signed himself, “ Your devoted and ever-adoring husband to be, Vladimir.”

I was standing by a small table in the drawing-room when this letter was brought to me. I had been idly examining a blotting-book that Wee-Wee had been showing me earlier in the day. It had wooden covers, and on the front cover she had painted one of her flower groups. I never know what sort of flowers Wee-Wee’s are meant for ; but she says that’s all right, as she’s an “ impressionist.” The covers were lined with silk, and there was a large pocket inside the front cover. I had been looking at this blotter and thinking again how *horribly* done Wee-Wee’s flowers were, when the letter was brought me, and I read it still standing by the table. I had finished the letter, and, feeling a good deal upset, was preparing to go up to my room and destroy such a dangerous and compromising document, when two sets of callers were shown in, those Soames people from the Grange, and — Josiah Multimill !

If only I’d escaped a moment earlier !

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I must hide the letter somewhere at once, with its great tell-tale G and coronet and its compromising contents. Certainly, pockets had their virtue in an emergency, though they ruined the fit and style of a gown. I'd a plain robe on, cut *princesse* and fastening down the back; not a nook or cranny anywhere to shove the terrible letter into. So I opened the blotting-book on the table, slipped the letter well down into the pocket inside the cover, and met the unwelcome invaders with a perfectly *dégagée* air. Wee-Wee came in a moment later. All through the visit I was trying to get back to that wretched blotter; but Josiah Multimill was more *awful* than usual. And when he took his departure he would have me go to the entrance with him to look at the motor he'd come over in, and decide whether I would like the one he's going to give me built in the same style. He kept on explaining and prosing till I was wild. Then nothing would satisfy him but my getting in and going up and down the avenue once or twice to see how I liked the action. He kept me

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an immense time. I saw the Soameses leave, and presently Wee-Wee drove by in her pony carriage and waved her hand.

I got rid of him at last, and flew back to the big drawing-room. There was no blotting-book on any of the tables. I searched about for it, and questioned the servants, but they knew nothing of it. I went to Wee-Wee's den, hoping to find it on her writing-table. Not a sign of it! I went to the room Bosh facetiously calls his "study," thinking perhaps the blotter was a wifely gift. I tapped at the door and opened it. "May I come in? Are you studying very hard?"

"Awfully. But you may come in," was the answer. He was lying in a chair smoking cigarettes, and he took his feet off a table as I entered. He had thrown the book he had been reading on the floor.

"My dear girl," he said, "this is an unexpected honour and pleasure. What charming condescension on your part! Wee-Wee is out of the way, I hope and trust. I feel as if we must be two of the people stepped out of that novel I've been

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dozing over — ‘An Unholy Love.’ Are we, Blanche? Is that the idea?”

“Oh, no,” I said. “I’ve not come after *you*; not this journey. I’m after a blotting-book that I thought Wee-Wee might have given you. Has she?”

“No, she hasn’t,” he said. “Wee-Wee gives her blotting-books to others now, though ^{time} was when it was different. And if she did give me one, I wouldn’t have it. I like my blotting-paper unadulterated — without covers. Come, my child, don’t waste your youth and beauty looking for blotting-books, but accept a cigarette and sit down and have a confidential chat with me. I promise not to tell Mr. Multimill, if you’ll promise not to tell Wee-Wee.”

“All right,” I said; “but I’m not taking any just now. We’ll consider it a future fixture, shall we?”

And I went off to look for that miserable blotting-book elsewhere. It’s really a most alarming thing. That letter is nothing less than an explosive mine. Whoever finds it will read it, of course, and

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talk about it; and if it once reached J. M.'s ears that I'd been engaged to Prince Galoshkin at the same time as to him, devoted as he is, I *know* that, with his old-fashioned ideas, he'd end the engagement. And what a position mine would be then! The Powers that be would disown me, I verily believe; and every one would talk about it, and laugh about it, and perhaps even *pity* me. Horror of horrors!

If Babs or Beryl Clarges or that little Mrs. Jimmy Sharpe got hold of that letter, what a state of things it would be! She'd hold me in the hollow of her hand — at least, till I'm married. After that I shouldn't care so much. Wee-Wee wouldn't be so bad, but I wouldn't let even *her* get hold of it for anything.

Have I tried to be a little too clever, I wonder? What is that quotation about "Vaulting ambition, that over-reaches itself, and falls on its side" — I hope I sha'n't be like that. Wee-Wee didn't come back for ages. I had to possess my soul in patience till dinner. Then I asked her, though I had to be careful not to seem too

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eager, about the blotting-book. It seems it was one of her contributions to this disky bazaar, and she was taking it and a lot of other things over to the Vicarage when she passed us in her pony-carriage. I only wish I'd held up that pony-carriage! I dared not tell Wee-Wee there was an important letter in the pocket of the blotter, for she might mention it, and then some one would *look* for it; as it is, I hope it'll lie *perdu* till I get hold of it again.

I couldn't go round to the Vicarage after it to-night, because I have to seem indifferent, and pretend I only want it for the sake of Wee-Wee's flowers on the cover.

I've just got to wait till the bazaar opens to-morrow, and then go for the General and Fancy Stall, where they sell aggravations in leather and impossibilities in wood, and so on.

Thursday. — The bazaar is over, and I've *not* got that wretch of a blotting-book, and don't even know where it is.

As soon as possible after the opening ceremony performed by Wee-Wee in great

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state, I went for the General and Fancy Stall. But a perfect mob had poured into the grounds by that time; local people from Ashmore and all the villages round, and lots of house-parties as well. The Vicareess herself was in charge of the General and Fancy Stall, and, leaving my "Witch's Cave" to take care of itself for a time, I went after my quarry. They were all up to the eyes in goods and business. They were very anxious to oblige, however, and promised to look out for the wretched thing (I simply *won't* write its name); but I believe they scarcely took in what I was saying. I couldn't make *too* much fuss over it, as that would look funny, and rouse curiosity. So I went back to my *sorcering*, and read palms and told fortunes in a most reckless manner.

Later I sang at the Café Chantant, which was rather a queer affair. Popsy (Lady Ramsgate), who is staying at the Grange, came over to help, escorted by her latest *fiancé*, a college chum of her grandson's. She was in white Indian muslin, made Empire, with a big, frilled

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baby hat to match, and she sang some of the things from the "Toddling Tots Tunes," that every one's singing now; and then she gave "Comin' thro' the Rye," and when she got to the line "All the lads they smile at me," given with her youthfullest grin, well, the local lads in the audience *did* smile — and the lassies too — *audibly!*

I went again and again to the Fancy Stall. At last the Vicaress, all smiles, said she had saved the blotter for me, and produced — another one! They made a search for the genuine article, but couldn't find it, and it's evidently been sold. That letter, in which the poor, dear Prince gives me away, has gone on its travels. What am I to do now?

Friday. — They say the bazaar was a huge success, and enough money was taken not only to provide parasols for the women of the Lirripop Coast, but for those of a neighbouring tribe as well.

That's *their* point of view. Myself found it a distinctly hideous day. It's new to me to have anything on my mind, unless

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it's a pretty hat or toque. I don't like the feeling. I begin to wish I'd never met the poor Prince at Irgendeinbad, or at least that he hadn't written to me that fatal day. The Vicaress called this afternoon, and after telling us the above particulars about the bazaar, she turned to me and said: "I was so very sorry about the blotting-book you wanted to secure, Miss de Vere. One of my helpers sold it before I knew. But I can tell you who was the purchaser, and I'm sure she would let you have it, as you set such a particular value on it — Mrs. Higley, wife of the village doctor (he's only a surgeon, but they always say doctor here), at Hedgebury, two miles away."

As Wee-Wee looked surprised, I said to her: "It's the blotting-book with that sweet flower-group of yours on the cover. I think it really beats any you've ever done, and I wanted to have it."

How the white ones are mounting up!
Wonder how many white ones make a
black one?

Wee-Wee preened her feathers, meta-

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phorically, and purred. What a shocking mix-up that simile is! The cat and the bird together! Well, and so they *are* together, pretty often — with the bird inside!

“Yes,” said the gratified Wee-Wee; “I think it wasn’t a bad impressionist study of roses.” (N. B. — I never knew till that moment what the flowers were meant for!)

The Vicaress took up the tale. “Was that your work, Lady Genevieve? It was exquisite. I had no idea you were such a gifted artist.”

O ye gods and little fishes! Think of a *Vicaress*, of all people, being guilty of such terminological inexactitudes!

I thanked her for the trouble she’d taken, but said I thought I would leave Mrs. Higley in possession, and asked Wee-Wee to do me another, which she, suddenly realizing that she was a popular artist whose work was in almost *troublesome* demand, sweetly promised she would. But, of course, I mean to go to Hedgebury the first opportunity I get, *retrieve* the

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blotting-book with its ridiculous roses, get the letter out, and reduce it to ashes.

Friday. — They've all been so simply horribly tiresome and aggravating. I couldn't get away from them for a moment. But to-day Wee-Wee was in her room with a headache, and Bosh was off to Ridgemount for a day's shooting. So I motored to Hedgebury to look up Mrs. Higley — and was foiled again! I found the village surgeon's house all right enough, one of a row of fearful little shanties all stuck together.

I wrote my name and a few words of explanation on a card, and was shown into a ghastly little "reception-room," with weird things under glass shades on the mantelpiece, and violent-coloured furniture yelling at me. There was a bustle and a great deal of whispering in a room separated by folding-doors from the one I was in, and then some one went upstairs, and a prolonged struggle went on in a room overhead — the surgeon's wife was

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evidently putting on what I suppose she'd call her "best things."

Presently there was a great rustling on the little staircase, and then a small, ordinary-looking woman, in a country-made silk dress and a nervous condition, "entered" to me.

Her wrists were loaded with silver bangles, some of which, owing no doubt to flurry in putting on, fell off as she advanced, and she left them lying on the floor.

"You wished to see me, Madam, I believe," she said. "I am Mrs. Higley;" and she presented me with something between a bow and a curtsy.

Well, I told her all about it. I repeated all those white ones, that are turning into one big black one, about having set my heart on possessing that particular specimen of my friend's flower-painting, and all the rest of the tiresome nonsense (I'm getting quickly into training as a novelist), and waited for her reply. When she began, "*I am* so sorry," I knew I was baffled again. "*I am* so sorry. *I did*

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buy the blotting-book, and some other things, but I've given it away."

"Perhaps your friend," I began, for I felt I was out to get the thing, and really couldn't go back without it. But she weighed in with, "Oh, it wasn't exactly a *friend*; we shouldn't consider people like them *friends*. She had been a paying guest here for some time. She was suffering from nervous breakdown, owing to all the thought-reading and hypnotism. Dr. Higley says it's not safe to meddle with such things. But then *they* do it for a living. We liked her a good deal," she added, as if apologizing to me for the fact, "and when she left us the day before yesterday, I gave her the blotting-book as a little parting present. But if I had known that those beautiful flowers were painted by Lady Genevieve Tresylllan, I should have kept the blotter and given Mrs. Parker something else."

"I couldn't ask you to write to this Mrs. Parker and explain things, could I?" I said. "Because you made a *present* of the book; but perhaps if *I* wrote and told

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how it is, that the flowers were promised me by my friend, and that I've quite a little superstition about them — ”

“ Oh, I'm sure she would let you have them, but I really don't know where she is just now,” said Mrs. Higley in some distress. “ She was to join her husband, and they were to go for a little *out* on the Continent before sailing for Melbourne. They have been engaged for a very good Australian tour for the coming winter — *summer* I suppose it will be there. The Zig-Zags is their performing name.”

“ Oh, is it the Zig-Zags ? ” said I. “ They were giving their show in London in the summer.”

The surgeon's wife looked slightly shocked and uncomfortable. “ I think there must be a little mistake,” she said. “ It is not a *show* that they give, but a very refined and, I believe, wonderful entertainment. I hope you don't think, Madam, that I would have any one as paying guest who was not quite refined and — ”

“ That's all right,” I interrupted. “ I

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know what the Zig-Zags do. I've seen them do it. But life isn't long enough to say entertainment, so I say show. You can't give me any address where I could write to this little thought-reading woman?"

"I'm *very* sorry, but I can't. After their little *out* on the Continent, they will sail for Melbourne, but I don't quite know when. They open in Melbourne in the late autumn, and I've promised to write to her at the Post Office there, but nothing was said about letters and addresses in the meantime. They *had* a house in London, I believe, but they've let it."

Finding nothing more was to be done, and that the best I could do was to write to the Post Office, Melbourne, I prepared to retreat, especially as I thought I saw Mrs. Higley getting up the scaffolding to ask me to have tea. So I fled, leaving her *thanking* me for my visit, so very, very sorry she hadn't been able, and so on, and *hoping* Sir Lyonel and Lady Genevieve Tresyllan and *all the company* at Ashmore Park were quite well!

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What a weird point of view a little person like that must have! Living all the year round in a country village, in a ghastly little house, one of a row of ghastly little houses all stuck together, with a country-made "silk dress for best," and thinking it worth while to be very humble and squirmy to people who can do her neither harm nor good!

It's a hateful business, but not so bad, perhaps, as it might have been. I sha'n't get it back now before I'm married. The only thing I can do is to write to the Post Office, Melbourne, sit tight, and keep a stiff upper lip. If only I'd — no, I won't begin "if only;" it's a rotten phrase. There's just one person I should feel some satisfaction in confiding in, as to the hole I've got into, and that's Norty; but I sha'n't do it — *now*.

XIII

WEDDINGS AND 'MOONS

Blanche's Diary continued.

Old Court, Meadowbury, October 9th. —
Back in my home, and not to leave it again till I go to another.

Only a few days now before the day of white satin and orange blossom and "Wilt thou have this man?" And a month or so ago I thought it would be a very different man, though I don't know that I cared any more for him.

The presents are simply *pouring* in, and Joan and Hildegard are in the seventh heaven arranging them. As usual, there's a frantic lot all of one pattern. In *my* case it takes the form of umbrella handles, jewelled and otherwise. People seem to think I'm going to pass the rest of my life in the open, and in very bad weather

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at that. The Bullyon-Boundermeres have actually sent me a most gorgeous pair of opera-glasses, all enamel and jewels. I suppose they look upon it as paying toll for being admitted among *us*. As to repetitions in wedding-gifts, there's *one* pattern of present that *can't* be repeated too often — and that pattern is *cheque*! It's to be an entirely white wedding, out of compliment to my front name. The bridesmaids aren't to have a touch of colour, even in their posies, and the school children are to strew nothing but white flowers in my bridal path.

J. M. has given me a ripping all-white Darracq that we shall "go away" in. I've dubbed it *carte blanche*. Stella Clackmannan's youngest boy is to be a page, and Babs the Second a *pagess*, if there is such a thing. The whole show is to be "presented" by Soames of Piccadilly.

To-day came a sapphire pendant from my dear old Daphne, and *what* a letter she sends with it! Surely never was such a letter sent with a wedding-present before, since people first were married and first

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wrote letters. It's "full of wise saws and modern instances," as the Psalmist says — very preachy, very sorrowful, but very loving. Yes, old girl, I know. But though all you say may be true, it's not the sort of truth we can all live up to. Had I been *Early Victorian*, I might have cried over the letter; but crying, blushing, and fainting are forgotten industries, like staining glass and dyeing something purple.

Daphne needn't worry about me. I don't know that I'm altogether worth it. And she oughtn't to blame me either. I'm the victim of circs. As for her *pity*, I simply won't have it, and shall return it to her, carriage paid. I shall do very well indeed. One can't have *everything*, and the one thing one *must* have in *our* world is Money with a big M. I've plenty of social ambition, and in my new position I mean to be right bang on the premises, and a leader among the leaders. Even as a single girl, with a simply *beggarly* allowance to outrun, I've managed to make some small mark socially. Joan is delighted to have me removed from her path. Hildegarde is in raptures at

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the prospect of being presented next spring. The Powers that be smile approval on me and all my works. I can promise them I won't be like that little Violet Cashless, when she was married last month to old Lord Lucre (though he *has* only one eye, he managed to pick out the prettiest *débutante* of the year!). She had been crying so *shockingly*, and was in such a state of collapse on her wedding morning that they had to enamel her face to make her fit to be seen, and give her cocaine or something to get her to buck up sufficiently to be dressed. And what the *Sideglancer* called "a pretty and touching innovation, likely to catch on at weddings" — *i. e.*, Cashless *mère* standing close to her daughter through the ceremony — was simply and solely to prevent her from bolting before the knot was tied.

But Violet's only a half-bred 'un, after all. Blood tells in these matters, and, when you've made up your mind to a thing, carries you through with a stiff upper lip.

Josiah (I suppose I *must* call him so sometimes, though I jib at it every time) has

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given me a simply gorgeous tiara and collet necklace to match — diamonds and sapphires, enormous stones — as well as heaps of smaller bits of jewelry. I really don't think I could have done *much* better as to jewels had I become Princess Galoshkin. But, in this my last Speech and Confession (like those darling highwaymen on the road to Tyburn), I will own that, to my last hour, I shall regret "The Roof of Heaven," and hate the woman, whoever she may be, that will wear it!

I've just heard that *that other wedding* is to be next week, too.

Last time I saw Norty I asked him if he had realized what our relationship to each other would be when he was married to Aunt Goldmont? He said he hadn't thought about it before, but he supposed he would be my "first uncle once removed," and he hoped he should find me a "dutiful niece."

He's a *horrid* boy, and I'm glad to say I almost *quite* hate him now.

Among the presents that came yesterday was a little bangle from him, with "Girlie"

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on it in small sapphires and brilliants. (That's always been his little name for me.)

I've sent him a little morocco memo.-book, with gold corners and monogram, and a wee gold pencil; and on the front page I've written his own aphorism — if that's the right word — “Life's a rotten business, and nothing matters much.”

Aunt Goldmont has sent me a book, but I don't know what it's about; and *I've* sent *her* a book — I forget its name.

Claridge's. November. — What a simply horrid institution honeymoons are! At the same time, what a blessing that they're briefer than they used to be! I was so thankful to get away from that penitential old prison the Dunstables lent us and come to town. We sha'n't settle into the house in Park Lane much before the spring. In the meantime, it's much livelier and comfier here, and we shall soon be on the wing again.

And now let me set down how the wedding went off, for the benefit of future ages. I went through it without turning a hair, and

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came up smiling. My bridal robe was a dead-white satin *princesse*, quite plain and simple — some of the mater's old Brussels point on the bodice and train, and the Brussels veil she was married in herself.

People were simply most awfully kind in their comments. Some one said I looked a "dream," and some one else said I was "a perfect picture" (the bridegroom, I suppose, being the gold frame).

Josiah looked particularly awful. Wedding garments do *not* suit any one who's stout and bald. After the ceremony, too, he smiled a lot, which *also* is *most* unbecoming to him. Indeed, once or twice during the reception at home, with *all* my pluck, I felt, as I looked at him receiving congrats., that, though I'd scarcely been married an hour, I must rush straight off and get a divorce.

There were only one or two little hitches in the function.

Babs the Second, finding her duties as "pagess" not to her taste, turned refractory, and finally had to be carried screaming from the church. Stella Clackmannan's

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little Nigel, not demoralized by this awful example, did duty for both like a little angel.

The village choir was more than a bit out of tune in "The voice that breathed o'er Eden;" then the supply of white mums that the school children strewed in my path ran short. Oh, and another thing — some local people, in spite of requests to the contrary, threw a lot of those beastly confetti over me, and, though I had to smile, I felt more like braining them.

The bridesmaids, on the whole, were a success, but those Incroyable hats want some wearing, and, between *me* and *myself*, Winnie and Cuckoo Delamont didn't come through the ordeal well, especially Cuckoo.

Every one was so sweet in carrying out the scheme of a white wedding, and dressing accordingly, except the Duchess of Dunstable, who said she forgot, and came in plaid! Of course she *didn't* forget, but she had nothing suitable in her wardrobe, and didn't mean to get anything. I'd be the *last* to say things about people, especially family connections, but the Dunstables are

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just as miserly as they make 'em. They agree in mising, though in nothing else. The little five-o'clock tea-set they set me is plated! There! I know one oughtn't to look a gift-horse in the mouth, but, when the gift-horse turns out to be not a *horse* at all, but a common little *donkey*, one can't help mentioning it.

And now I beg to make a present to all and sundry of this social conundrum: When a girl gets a positively *rotten* wedding present from people who are simply rolling, ought she to thank them for it as if it were a proper one?

I don't think any one cried when I went away, except Hildegard and my old Nurse. *I* didn't cry. No, it wasn't that I was hard and unfeeling, but there *are* occasions when, if you once began to cry, you'd never leave off.

That other wedding took place at St. Agatha's, Berkeley Square, the day after mine. Miss Jermyn was there, and has told me all about it. Norty looked particularly handsome, she said, and rather serious for once. His brother Kiddy was

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best man. Aunt Goldmont had a brand-new transformation (auburn this time), and wore a gown of chiffon-velours (dregs-of-wine shade), with toque to match. She carried an ivory prayer-book. The church was packed (I rather fancy they put boards outside with "House Full"), and the choir of St. Agatha's sang, "O Perfect Love" in their best style. Among the crowd who witnessed the performance was Popsy, Lady Ramsgate, dressed for fifteen, with young Ronny Foljambe in tow (he's just left Eton, and I suppose was having an object-lesson in marriage *à la mode*).

The happy pair are mooning at Aunt Goldmont's place, Fairy Glen, near Torquay.

Josiah has such a queer vocabulary. I don't mean *slang* or *mining* terms. He uses those sometimes, and then apologizes, though *they're* all right, and I've annexed some of them myself. But yesterday he said some one or other was "ladylike." I simply yelled. Then he got a bit huffy, and said he supposed the term was old-fashioned, and sometimes he feared that *what it meant*

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was old-fashioned too. Really, as a retort, it was "not 'arf," and I told him so. I've asked him if I have any in-laws? He's vague on the point, and clearly doesn't mean to produce any; which is by way of being a blessing, for *in-laws* that, socially speaking, are *outlaws*, would be a problem that would want some solving.

The other day some relative or friend of Josiah's, who had evidently read the account of our wedding in the papers, and was foggy as to how far my little title will stretch, wrote to him and directed it: "The Hon. Josiah Multimill."

There's a gem!

Now that I'm married, the finding of that letter couldn't do so much harm. But still I must get it back. It would make things, to say the least, very *unpleasant*, if Josiah got to know of it, and unpleasantness of that kind is such a bore, however coolly one may carry it off. Very likely his anger would make him stingy, too, and I must say at present he denies me nothing. Wonder if that little thought-reading woman has got to Melbourne yet, and has found the letter I

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wrote her? She's to write me in my old name at my old home, and I've told Hildgarde to look out for it and send it on. She's a good little girl, with a slavish adoration for my illustrious self. I really quite like her. Joan I never *did* like; though, of course, I feel as a sister towards her.

XIV

THE DISOBEDIENCE OF A GOOD GIRL — “ A PREY TO BLACKMAILERS ”

Mabel Frothingly's Diary.

Grosvenor Square, November 7th. — We are in town for a week or two to make final preparations for wintering in the South. My uncle is very feeble. He does not go out at all here, but takes a little daily exercise in the house, leaning on Bates's arm. I am as attentive and dutiful as I can be, but I feel myself a dreadful traitress, and am going to be an even worse one. Uncle thinks I have acted on what he said to me months ago about the de Vere family, and have seen no more of Rollo.

Shortly after his speaking to me as he did, when we had left town and were at The Woodlands, he referred to the matter, asking me if I had seen anything of Rollo lately.

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I said No, which was not exactly untrue, for I had not seen him for a week or ten days. He said that was right, and that I was a good, dutiful girl, one of those girls who are content to believe that their elders know best. And for the rest, he said, he was convinced a girl of my quiet, steady nature would not be seriously attracted by one of such a family as the de Veres.

I felt how little I deserved his praise. I felt wicked and deceitful. But, oh! Uncle was young once, and perhaps in love, and yet he has forgotten to make allowances for others who are young *now* and in love. What am I saying? Uncle has no notion that I am or ever was seriously in love.

I have seen Rollo often. I cannot hide from him how very dear he is to me. He loves me so much! He says I am unlike any girl he ever met. What is it in me, I wonder, that he finds so different from other girls? Certainly, I am very different from his sister, Blanche. I don't think Blanche could care much for *any one*. But the world in general seems to find her exactly what she

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ought to be; and, no doubt, as the wife of that enormously rich Mr. Multimill, she will be more popular than ever.

Rollo is pleading with me to be married secretly before Uncle and I go away. He says that, unless we belong utterly to each other, he cannot bear the thought of our being parted for months, and of others, perhaps, "trying to win my love away from him." It is very, *very* sweet that he should feel so. I feel just the same about him. But I *dare* not do such a wrong, undutiful thing as marry secretly, and one whom my uncle disapproves. Of course, he did not suspect that my happiness was at stake. I must always remember that. Indeed, Rollo says that, in my uncle's state of health, he did not quite realize what he was saying when he warned me; that, owing to his unhinged, feeble condition, he may have in a great measure *imagined* his dislike of the de Vere family, and I, too, think that it is not unlikely. How hard, how cruel it would be if, owing to his not being his old self, I obeyed commands my uncle would never

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have laid upon me, in health, and wrecked my happiness !

Monday, November 12th. — Rollo has prevailed. I have agreed to a secret marriage. As he says, it would be dreadful to be parted for months, unless we knew that we belonged to each other. We are to be married on Thursday, by special license, at a church in a distant northern suburb, Hackney. I suppose it is old-fashioned of me, but I should not feel that a marriage merely before the Registrar, as he at first suggested, would be a proper marriage.

I am out so much shopping, in preparation for our going abroad, that an absence of some hours would excite no surprise at home.

Friday, 16th. — I have taken the step. I am Rollo's wife. How my heart throbs as I say it over to myself ! — my heart, over which I wear the dear, sacred wedding-ring. I went out yesterday, ostensibly to go to Olga Fiton's about some dresses ; then I sent the motor home, as I said I was going to spend

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the afternoon with Mrs. Manners, who is still quite an invalid, but I only inquired about her at the door, and then took a taximo all the way to Hackney. It would have seemed a fearfully dreary journey in the dull autumn afternoon, but for my Rollo, my own love, waiting for me at the other end. We went straight into the church, a dark old building in a little mean street, and the clergyman was there, and, with the verger and his wife for witnesses, we were married by special license.

I was frightened at what I had done when it was over, and we walked up and down some of the strange, dull little streets in the neighbourhood, and he reassured me, and at last I was quite, or almost, calm again. He made me see things so much more cheerfully. I am sure there is a great deal in what he says — that if my uncle *should* recover some of his health and strength in the warmth and sunshine we are going to, he would see things differently, and I might tell him of my marriage without having to suffer more, perhaps, than a little passing anger. Then, if I am to have the

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sorrow of losing him, I shall not feel the loneliness I should otherwise have felt, for I shall know that I belong to the one I love, and that he belongs to me.

After we had walked about a little, and he had comforted me in this way, we took a cab back to town, and had tea at a quiet, out-of-the-way restaurant, and then I parted from my beloved husband (that is the first time I have written it), and came home.

My uncle seemed a little better and more cheerful when I read the evening papers to him after dinner. He is looking forward very much to our leaving next week, and hoping he will benefit. But oh, how differently *I* feel about leaving! Parting from my Only One!

But we *belong* to each other, and no one can separate us now. Let that be my comfort. There need no longer be any anxieties or jealousies about possible rivals.

Tuesday, November 20th. — A most disquieting thing happened to-day. I was sitting in what Blanche (my sister now!) would call my den, when I was told a

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person wished to see me. When she was shown in it proved to be Wilson, the maid who left me some months ago. She looked as sly and impudent as ever.

"I'm afraid it's no use coming to me for another character, Wilson," I said. "I've given you one, and that must suffice."

She quite tossed her head. "I don't want any character, thank you, ma'am. I can do without a character now. I'm married. It's not Wilson any longer, if you please, but Mrs. Dibbs."

"I'm glad to hear it," I said. "I hope your husband can give you a good home."

"Oh, yes, thank you. We've a small business — out Hackney way."

She looked at me in a peculiarly sly way, and I felt my colour rising.

"And he does a little on the Turf in the flat-racing season," she added.

"Well," I said, "I'm pleased to hear you are comfortably settled, though I think it would be wiser of your husband to leave the Turf alone. I'm very busy just now, preparing to go abroad with my

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uncle, and I can't spare you more than a minute."

"Oh, I think you'll spare me more than a minute," she said, coming and seating herself close to me, and lowering her voice almost to a whisper. "I'm *sure* you'll spare me more than a minute — Mrs. de Vere."

I felt myself turn white to the lips as I leaned back in my chair and gazed at her.

"I know all about it, ma'am," she went on with quiet exultation. "My Bob's father is verger at St. Barnabas', and him and Bob's mother was witnesses at a certain marriage the last Thursday as ever was. The way I got to know it was this. Sunday, the old people always comes to tea with Bob and I, and last Sunday, day before yesterday, when we was sitting at tea, the old gentleman says, as he took his third cup, 'We'd a fine young run-away couple hitched at the church on Thursday,' he says, 'and me and my old Dutch was witnesses. The lady had a name I know well enough,' he says, 'through seeing it on bottles of beer.'"

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So I pricked up my ears, and I says, 'Not Frothingly, sure?' 'Yes,' he says, 'that's the name — Frothingly — Mabel Frothingly.' 'Why, then,' says I, 'it's my young lady as was, and for sure she's married to displease her uncle, and is going to keep it dark. What was the gentleman's name?' I arst. 'Well,' he says, 'I can spell it, but I'm blest if I can say it.' So he spells it, and I knew it was the Hon. de Vere, that the servants used to say was one of Miss Mabel's suitors. And so, when the old gentleman and lady was gone, Bob says, 'Minnie, wasn't that young lady of yours very rich?' 'She *will* be,' I says. 'She's adopted daughter and heiress of Sir James Frothingly, the great brewer, and they used to say in the servants' hall there that, when the old gentleman dies, Miss Mabel will be one of the richest ladies in England.' 'Well, then,' says Bob, 'there's money in this for *us*. Your young lady as was is keeping it dark from the old gent. So you go and see your young lady as was, Minnie,' he says, 'and ask her what

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she'll give us for keeping her secret.' Bob *made* me come, ma'am. Though he's a good fellow enough, he makes me mind him."

I had sat motionless while she rapidly whispered on and on, overwhelmed by the misfortune that had befallen me, too much dazed to form any plan of action. "Oh!" I cried at last, clasping my hands in agony, "how soon my disobedience and deceit are punished! Already the prey of blackmailers!"

"Oh, ma'am!" she said, "that ain't a nice word. Bob and me ain't blackmailers. We're honest, well-conducted people. But we're poor, and Bob says that to keep a secret like this, that's worth millions to you, ma'am, perhaps, for the old gentleman might cut you off if he knew, else why do it on the quiet? — Bob says that to keep such a secret for any one is just as honestly worth money as selling 'em goods, or doing a job of work for 'em."

I walked up and down the room, and then stopped before her. "I'm not at all sure," I said, trying to speak calmly

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and confidently, "that I shall not tell my uncle everything."

"Oh, but I think you *are* sure, ma'am," she said softly, in that sly, hateful manner, "that you won't tell him, for you must have had a good reason for doing the job so quiet. But it's nothing to be low about. We don't want to frighten you, Bob and me. Just a bit of money now and then, and a signed agreement to give us a nice sum when you come into your fortune, ma'am, and it'll be all the same as if we didn't know."

I gave her five pounds, and got rid of her for that time; but she extorted a promise from me that I will go to this horrible little shop at Hackney "to see them about it," otherwise she will come here again; and that I cannot have.

I shall see Rollo to-morrow. Oh, my Love! My husband!

Wednesday. — I met my Love to-day, and told him of the trouble that has followed our marriage so quickly. He was angry and upset, I could see, but he tried

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to make me look at it as cheerfully as possible. He accompanied me to the place at Hackney, and tried to frighten the people by telling them blackmailing was a criminal offence, and they were making themselves liable to heavy punishment. But it was of no use. They knew the strength of their position. The husband, an unpleasant-looking man, had prepared a document setting forth all the facts, and promising ten thousand pounds when I inherit my poor uncle's property.

It is another deep, aching wound in my conscience that I seem to be calculating on my good uncle's death in signing what amounts really to a post-obit.

Rollo did his best to modify their demands. "Ten thousand pounds! It's monstrous!" he said. "I can't let you sign it, dear. You had better leave this business alone altogether, and lay the whole matter before Sir James. I have no doubt of his forgiving you very soon."

But they were not to be impressed.

"Oh, yes, you have, sir," said the man; "you've a *good bit* of doubt of the

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old gentleman forgiving her, and so's the young lady. Ten thousand ain't too much to pay out of *millions* for keeping such a secret; and I tell you straight, though not meaning no disrespect, that if the young lady don't sign this 'ere paper now and give us a few pounds in addition to the fi'-pun-note she gave my wife on Tuesday night, why, Sir James Frothingly'll get a little surprise packet to-morrow morning, telling him to search the register of St. Barnabas' Church, Dismal Road, 'ackney."

So I signed the paper, and gave the dreadful creatures ten pounds more; and then Rollo and I went away and drove back to town. We had tea together, and then he had to go straight back to Clifgate, and I came home.

He made me see things more cheerfully, as he always does. But he has his own troubles, poor darling! I have found out that he is in debt, much as he tried to conceal it from me, and have insisted on helping him as far as my present means allow.

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If he can get leave, he will run over to the Riviera — not to Mentone, but to some neighbouring place — and then we shall be able to meet perhaps “on the quiet,” as he says.

It cheers me to think I may not be parting from him for as long as I thought I was.

My uncle and I leave to-night.

XV

CHRISTMAS REDIVIVUS — “ROLLO’S ENTANGLEMENT” — FOILED AGAIN!

Blanche’s Diary.

Broadlands, Yuletide. — I said that, in my new position, with unlimited cash at my back, I meant to bring off some big things. I’ve begun already, though only two months married! I’ve *Reinstated Christmas* with my *Yuletide Revels at Broadlands*. Yes, thanks to me, Christmas will no longer be voted poky and middle-class. I got together a lovely crowd, and we put in a simply ripping time. Bosh and Wee-Wee came, of course; and among the mob was that old *dear*, Colonel Jermyn, with his sister, who, though middle-aged and with the remains of considerable ugliness, is a right-down good sort, warranted to make things sim-

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mer anywhere. Aunt Goldie refused at first, but Norty accepted, so, like a dutiful wife, she followed her husband.

We'd holly and mistletoe everywhere, a great Yule log burning in the hall, and all the traditional dishes at dinner, with snap-dragon afterwards. Christmas Eve we all hung out our stockings, and went round putting the most absurd things we could think of into them, though Bosh said nothing we could *put in* would be so absurd as what had been *taken out* of *some* of them.

I revived all the old Christmas customs I could think of. The Vicaress here and some of the local people helped me. The Waits came and sang carols and things, and we had them in and gave them *wassail*. Norty criticized them and their singing unmercifully, said their *scales* were wrong, and they were *fraudulent Waits*, liable to be indicted under the Act.

I gave them all a lovely surprise on Christmas night. The *Mummers* came round (they were the same village creatures as the Waits; the Vicaress and I had

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drilled them, and I got their dresses from town). They came into the hall and went on just as the Mummers used to go on in the Middle Ages. Norty said they didn't *mum* properly, and that one of them was tipsy, which I think was distinctly horrid of him.

Then, when the *Mummers* were gone, we sat round the Yule log and roasted chestnuts and told stories — fact or fiction — but they had to be original (as Norty, who was at his very wittiest, said the chestnuts we were roasting were the only ones allowed). Bosh told rather a risky one, but Miss Jermyn beat him out of sight. Josiah frowned instead of laughing, but nobody notices what he does.

Norty was quite wonderful in finding out old Christmas games for us to play. I'd no idea he was so learned, or that people all that time ago had such a good notion of amusing themselves. (Bosh remarked to me that there was nothing to be surprised at in Norty knowing so much of such things, for, by his marriage, he had proved himself quite an *antiquarian*!)

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He constituted himself Lord of Misrule, and set us all playing the most absurd old games. He said people used to play them in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Josiah turned glumpy, and said he didn't believe they were *ever* played, then or at any *other* time, and Aunt Goldie backed him up. Poor thing, she had tried desperately hard all day to be young and keep pace with the rest of us, but she couldn't stay the distance; she was short of gallops from the first, and at last crumpled up entirely and vanished to the upper regions.

Every one's been so sweet, loading me with congrats. on my success in getting Christmas out of the lumber-room. The *Sideglancer*, the *Peeress*, and *West End Whispers* have all written to ask for interviews and photos, and they want me to send them articles on "Christmas as an Opportunity for Hostesses," "Christmas Redivivus," and so on. Wee-Wee says that that little Mrs. Jimmy Sharpe will be green and yellow.

It seems a pity, just as I'm enjoying such a blaze of triumph, that Josiah and

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I should have had our first — no, not quarrel; I never quarrel, it's too much trouble. But he began to complain of certain Christmas customs — the mistletoe and all that.

"Why," I said, "you ought to be *immensely* proud that your wife has brought back Christmas. And you ought to *reverence* all those old Yuletide customs. Don't you know that we get the mistletoe and all its privileges *direct* from the Druids?"

And he actually said the Druids might be *somethinged*, and that if they set all that nonsense going they ought to have been ashamed of themselves. And he went on to say, "Such romping and flirting may be pardonable in boys and girls, but *men* ought to have more sense, and *married women* more reserve and dignity. And I tell you plainly, Blanche," he wound up, "that I *expect* those qualities in my wife."

"*Reserve? Dignity?*" I cried. "My dear man, where *do* you pick up these weird old-world expressions? And if you wanted those poky qualities in your wife,

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why on *earth* didn't you look for her in the Middle Classes?"

He said no more, and neither did I; for I knew I had got right home.

I'm afraid I see symptoms in him of being rude to Norty — such bad form, in his own house! and so ungrateful too, for it was through Norty he first got a footing in Society — and met *Me!*

N. B. — If my better-half gets on his hind legs in this way over mere trifles and everyday matters of course, like the Christmas games and fun, what would he do and say if that letter fell into his hands, and he realized that for three weeks or so he was practically jilted?

He'd take the floor in earnest, I suppose. If only I could get hold of the thing!

January, 1907. Claridge's. — In town for a few days' shopping. Josiah is going to cross to the other side on business, and I've positively elected to go with him and sample the States. I shall want a ghastly lot of frocks, and hats, and wraps, and goodness knows what.

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A letter from Hildegarde — good child! — enclosing one sent to my old home by the little thought-reading woman down under. A queer, rambling rigmarole. All her faculties, I suppose, have run to thought-reading and hypnotism, and the common or garden gift of writing a legible, coherent letter, has been left untrained. However, the gist of the scrawl is, that, though valuing the blotting-book as a present from Mrs. Higley, of Hedgebury, she will be very pleased to let *my ladyship* have it (she raises me in rank — how powerful these thought-readers are!), as I have a sentiment connected with it; that it is now at the London house of herself and her husband, that the said house has been let furnished by an agent during the “Zig-Zags” Australian tour; but that, if I called at 15 Twilight Grove, Shady Hamlet, near Regent’s Park, N. W., and tell the present occupier that Mrs. Parker wishes me to have it, she is sure I shall have no difficulty in getting possession of it. As to payment, she cannot *think*, and so on.”

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I shall go this afternoon, when I've done my shopping.

Later. — I've been after that blankety thing, and am positively and actually foiled again! And in a distinctly peculiar and sensational way. I took a taximo to Shady Hamlet, a queer, quiet collection of little Groves and Squares, somewhere north of Regent's Park and near a canal — one of those neighbourhoods whose inhabitants, I should say, are drawn largely from that *half-world* which is *not* the World's better half! A place where very little walking is done, but a good deal of cabbings; a place of high garden walls, and many trees, which make a becoming and convenient screen in summer, no doubt; but, seen as I saw it this winter afternoon, the disconcerted little houses trying to hide behind the bare branches, with the grey sky and damp pavements for entourage, made me think of some of their inhabitants caught shabby and without their paint and powder — a place through whose little, silent Groves and Squares a whisper seems to run, "H'sh-sh-sh! Don't say you came here!"

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Number 15 Twilight Grove proved to be a particularly small and *passée cottage ornée*. I gave my card, with a few words of explanation written on it, to the little servant, and was shown into a small back room, the thought-reader's drawing-room, evidently, with a French window opening on a tiny, dismal garden. I was looking about to see if that fearful blotting-book was anywhere in sight, thinking with joy that I should soon have possession of it, and that this was the last weird and unearthly little "drawing-room" I should have to make acquaintance with in my long quest, when the door opened, and a little person rustled in, and, after closing the door, stood looking at me. She was very much so indeed! A showy tea-gown, not in its first freshness, with a quantity of imitation lace on it, and a face of that extreme, conspicuous, self-conscious prettiness that is such awfully bad form. I don't say it because I'm jealous, but there *is* such a thing as being *too* pretty — pretty in too *voyant* a way — and this girl, like many girls of her class, was an example

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of it. She was not made up, — too young and pretty to need that. She stood with her great eyes fixed on my face, my card in her hand; but not a word or a smile.

In such a neighbourhood, and with a little person like that, of course one's prepared for anything; so I said what my business was as sweetly as poss., showed Mrs. Parker's letter, got out all those white ones again, gave them an extra polish and set them in a row, — particularly dear friend, — beautiful specimen of her work, — had been promised to me, but by a mistake got sold (I really think, if Wee-Wee ever so much as *mentions* her rotten flower-painting to me again, I shall have to brain her!) — and in short, as the owner agreed to my having the thing, I should be, etc., etc.

“Haven't you told *enough* of them now?” she cried suddenly, throwing my card on the floor. “Haven't you told *enough* falsehoods? But of course you couldn't speak the truth, even if you *tried*, being *his* sister! Such a *flimsy* falsehood too!” (Why ever didn't she

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use the briefer and more forcible word?) "A grand lady like you pretending to come after a mere blotting-book" — she tried to sneer here, but it didn't quite come off — "because it's got a painting on the cover done by a friend! You *know* you came out of base curiosity to look at your brother's poor victim! Or perhaps — perhaps" — she came close to me, her hands clasped together — "you have come to tell me I am never to see him again — the man I have loved too well — the man who has laid waste my life — Rollo de Vere!"

When she first began to speak, and accused me of romancing, I thought she must have found poor Galoshkin's letter by some chance; but as she went on and wound up, the limelight was turned full upon her, and in this rather tawdry and too sweetly pretty little person, I recognized — Rollo's Entanglement! A queer, unpleasant thing for me certainly!

No doubt, the poor little thing was *really* distressed and unhappy; but a little person like her, even *in extremis*, is unreal

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and affected, and given to fancying herself the heroine of a Farthing Fearful. When she came sliding up to me in melodramatic style, with the words, "You come to tell me I am never to see him again," I answered calmly, "I'm not in the habit of doing my brother's errands, especially such errands as that." And then she took the floor in earnest, and might have been leading lady in one of those dramas that go round the suburbs, "The Unhappiest Woman in the World," or something of that kind.

"I know what you mean by that," she said; "you mean that you despise me and think me unfit to speak to. And you sit there and look at me as if you were a superior being — you, who sold yourself last autumn. I know all about it. I know what women like you are like! Plays are written about you, and sermons are preached about you. You're sold in your youth, and after you're married you have lovers! And yet you think you may draw away your dresses" (very old-fashioned of the little person this! Draw-

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ing away dresses is *quite out*) “from women like me, who have only loved too well and believed too readily! A year ago, when I first saw your brother, I was a teacher in a school, steady, respected, and safe. I thought it dull then, and I was romantic and foolish — but oh! if I could be back there again, as I was before I ran away with him, hoping to be his wife!” Then her mood changed again, and she fell on her knees in front of me. “You are his sister — but you are a woman, like me. Tell me why it is so long, so long since he came to see me. Oh! you who are so powerful and great, use your influence with him. Make him keep his promise to a sister-woman, who has given up safety and shelter and a good name for him!”

Oh, Rollo! what a first-class idiot you are! Wasn't it enough to be courting and secretly marrying your heiress, but must you have an affair of *this* kind on hand too?

I really was sorry for the poor little creature. What *would* she have treated

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me to, had she known Rollo was *married*? But what an absurd chance that has led me into the rôle of being asked to straighten out Rollo's little indiscretions!

I could say nothing but sheer banalities, assure her I hadn't seen that lovely brother of mine for ages, and renew my request for the blotting-book.

She rose from her knees, and went off into heroics again, varied with mild abuse (the traditions of the school where she used to teach evidently still clung to her too much for full-flavoured language to come easily): "I wish I could think you really *do* want the thing," she cried passionately, in conclusion; "there would be some satisfaction *then* in preventing you from having it."

"But," I said mildly, "the owner *said* I might have it."

"I don't care!" she screamed. "The house and everything in it is mine while I live in it, and I'd rather burn or destroy *anything* than let *you* have it!" and she rushed out of the room, whirled upstairs, and I heard a door bang above. I went

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out into the passage. If I'd known exactly where the thing was, I would have gone for it in spite of that little fury; but I didn't.

The little servant, who had the air of being used to scenes, had come up from below to hear all she could of this one. I gave her some money, told her what it was I wanted and that it was really mine, but that her mistress was "in hysterics" — at which she treated me to a horrible wink — "and couldn't attend to me; that, if *she* would find what I wanted and bring it to me at Claridge's that evening or next day, I'd make it worth her while." She gladly undertook it, and I had to come away baffled again.

The little servant has not turned up this evening, however, and I have but small hopes of seeing her to-morrow. Perhaps the little person *did* burn the thing. But no such luck, I'm afraid. More likely she'd tear it to pieces in her rage, and then she'd find the letter, and, in her present revengeful state, would certainly send it straight to Josiah.

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I shouldn't hear the last of it in a hurry. He *disapproves* of *heaps* of things, I know; but he thinks a lot of me too, and, in a way, believes in me. That would all cease then. That letter would provide him with a fine, healthy young grievance, that he'd make the most of, and that would alter my position considerably, however I might face it out. I shall have to watch his letters, and I *do* hate that sort of thing; it's such a bore. I can't help being sorry for that little person, though she *is* likely to upset my caravan. Was she *really* such a donkey as to think that naughty boy of ours meant to marry her?

A little person who teaches in a school, or serves in a shop, or stands in the front row on the stage (though *she's* generally broad awake), may be *very sure* that when, with a vague vision of a wedding-ring in the offing, she runs off with Prince Charming, she is running *not towards* marriage, but *away* from it!

XVI

SAMPLING THE STATES — CRITICISM WHILE YOU WAIT

Blanche's Diary continued.

New York, February. — Here I am on the other side, and here I've been for some weeks.

If Josiah ever was a boy, it happened here; and I believe his *first* fortune was made here, though all the others were made in as many different parts of the world. He doesn't care to talk of his obscure origin and early struggles, and I'm sure I've no curiosity on the subject. Of all bores and horrors, the *worst* are those fearful boys who've tramped barefoot from somewhere, with only a halfpenny or a cent or something in their pockets, and have begun by sweeping out an office till some one told them to leave off!

Norty, who's been here and everywhere

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else, said to me before I started, "If you want a thumb-nail impression of the States, Girlie, here it is. From the time you steam up the Bay, interview Liberty Enlightening the World (as to Trusts, Tammany, and Tinned Goods), and step ashore, to the time you quit, you seem to be always in a hustling crowd, always going at full speed, and with bells ringing all round you."

It goes without saying that I've been received with open arms by Society in New York and Washington, and that I met lots of familiar faces.

The *New York Trumpeter* had both our portraits (Josiah looked simply most *awful* in his!) and a heading, in letters as tall as a finger, "Jos Multimill revisits the Land of his Birth with Beautiful Titled English Wife, whose Ancestor was one of the Barons that forced Jack to grant Magna." And *The Up-Town Eaves-dropper* published an Interview with me (entirely invented) called "British Society Leader airs her Views on our Women and Girls."

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I don't say I've not *got* my views on the subject, but I'll set them down nowhere but in my own, own diary.

This country's sometimes called the Paradise of Women, and the name's all right, if putting us always in front and giving us everything, almost before we ask for it, makes our Paradise. But it doesn't. In our *hearts*, all we women like to find our master, and, supposing we care for a man *at all*, we never like him so well as when he looks terrible and shouts, "I *forbid* you to do so-and-so!" It's such fun *then* to go and *do* it! And *that's* a joy the American wife don't know. She never gets the chance to quote those lovely words of Chaucer's, "Fie, fie, un-knit that something-or-other brow." In short, Female Columbia, with all her vaunted perfections, would be a nicer and even *happier* person for an occasional spanking, and it's her sub-consciousness that she needs it and will never get it at home that, in *my* opinion, leads to her marrying abroad so often.

The American Woman dresses well and

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spends big money on it; but she's no national originality that way. When she's tailor-built, she's Bond Street — when she's fluffy and frilly, she's Rue-de-la-Paix; and a *translation* never has *quite* the *verve* and force of the original. The Gibson Girl struck a national note, perhaps, but it was a *physical*, not a sartorial one — the poise of the body, the swing of the hips, the tilt of the chin, and the droop of the eyelids. Her vogue seems to me to be over. Poor girl! she doesn't live on Fifth Avenue now. She poises, and shrugs, and tilts, and droops, as a waitress or a store-clerk!

I've made a special study of the "buds," as they call them here — girls who made their first appearance at "débutante-teas" and other mild kick-ups, before Christmas. When Miss Columbia *is* pretty, she's all right, with the exception of her voice. But she's isn't pretty any *oftener* than the girls of other countries, and it's all their brag to say she is. And, pretty, or plain, there's an air about her of "I am the correct thing in girlhood," an evident

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conviction that she is *absolutely*, which makes a mere European person smile! I can tell her, though, that more than one of her countrymen has confided to a certain person, that his ideal of female charm is *British!*

Myself, I consider the *men* here to be both *better-looking* and *nicer* than the women, though it may be only my point of view. I've met some American boys who are quite nice, and can make love very prettily. I don't say any of them compare with — well — Norty, for instance. There's an eagerness, a strenuousness, a *worth-whileness* about even the best dude of the lot, that isn't *quite* good form. It's the taint of *work*, I suppose, for, though *he* may have been "reared in the lap" and have done nothing all his life, his father or grandfather (if he runs to such a luxury) worked hard at railways, or pork, or oil, or something, while Norty and I come of races that, except in war-time, have done nothing for *centuries*.

It has its drawbacks, all the same. It's led to Norty marrying Aunt Goldmont,

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and my having to take Josiah Multimill.

The other night I went to one of the dog-parties they're so fond of here. On the whole, I thought the doggies were too *loudly* scented, and wore a *little* too much jewelry. If only I'd had my darling Pompom to chaperon! In his black satin evening coat, with his diamond studs, and just a *soupçon* of *parfum d'amour*, he'd have left the field standing still.

The Teddy Bear craze gets no sympathy from me. I think it positively *ricky*, though I've had to go to some Teddy Bear parties. The Vandollarbilts' spook-party was quite a success. I believe I rather distinguished myself, and Clinton Vandollarbilt looked simply *deliciously* ghastly in his winding-sheet. The dance-programmes, shaped like tombstones, were quite an idea.

There are several things I admire in the American Constitution — rocking-chairs for one, and easy marriage laws for another. Of all the United States, the *Marriage State* seems to me the *least* united!

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They're such funny people here for going to law. Half the population seems to be always going to law with the other half. If Americans *have* a national dress, I should say it's a law-suit! Meeting Jack Flummery and his American wife in Washington, I stayed with them while Josiah went down to some place or other where, I believe, he was born. I don't know whether he found any *relatives* there, but he came back with *three* lawsuits on his hands!

We shall be returning soon. I've kept a sharp look-out on all Josiah's letters that have been forwarded from home. Nothing suspicious or dangerous-looking among them so far.

XVII

BLANCHE'S DÉBUT AS A HOSTESS — OF “ CAUSES ” — A CATASTROPHE

April, '07. 200 Park Lane. — Back again in my dear native land. Even in the short space of my absence, I find changes. They've got a New Religion, for one thing, and it seems to be booming. Great pieces of the Bible needn't be taken seriously (I never *could* read much of the Bible, and I see now how right I was!), and we're all to work together for something, and there's to be a general rising and awakening, and after *that* there'll be universal peace. I call that a lovely religion. It would just suit me. Even my *dearest* friend couldn't say I'm anything but *peaceable* — it's other people who won't be. I'm overjoyed to hear that the New Religion seems likely to cut out Father Hilary's

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denunciations of *us* and our doings completely!

Wednesday, April 24th. — The morning papers announce the death of Sir James Frothingly at Mentone. So our poor Rollo's money troubles are over, and he has one of the richest wives in England. He ought to thank me for having suggested the secret marriage, for ten to one if Mabel had been free, he would have been chucked by now. They say, young Lacksiller, backed up by the old Countess, has been after her the whole time she's been in the South. Never mind! *We've* secured her!

May 2nd. — My first season as a hostess has begun with great *éclat*. I've had the Colonial Premiers to dinner. I, who've just made my *début* as a hostess, secured them, when dozens of old stagers couldn't. Babs and that little Mrs. Jimmy Sharpe both tried and failed, and they hate me now, no doubt, with twenty-woman power. Everything went with a roar. Jean surpassed himself, and exactly the right note

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was struck in the menu with Baron de Bœuf Impérial — Suprême de Volaille à la Conférence — and Gelée Preferential Tariff. Olga Fiton did her best for me with what she called a *political* dinner gown (not so frivy as my frocks usually are), and I wore my big diamond tiara and rivière.

The Premiers are *all* darlings, but *if* I've a favourite, I suppose it's that sweet Botha, who was fighting us so desperately a few years ago. I'd some lovely chats with all of them, and developed my ideas for drawing closer the Mother Country and the Sister Nations. I flatter myself they were a good deal impressed, and rather astonished.

I couldn't help feeling that I could fill a larger picture than life offers nowadays. I ought to have lived in the days when a woman like me would have had a *salon*, where all the famous men met regularly, and State secrets would have been confided to me, and revolutions and all sorts of delicious things planned, and where all the Wits would have come and told me

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of the plays and lampoons they were writing. The Wits of *to-day* won't hand out any of their wit, even in return for the best dinner or supper you can give them. They save it all for the publisher.

I had a cheery little affair last night to meet the Fijian Giantess. The only little hitch was that every one wanted to sit near her at supper, and see how much she ate, so there was a bit of a scrim. I give two afternoon parties next week. For one I've engaged the Human Footballs, who've been giving their show at the Empire, and for the other I've got Rooti-Tooti-Lal, the Indian Seer, who's attained Nirvana, and can tell people all the incarnations they've passed through and will yet pass through, before Karma leaves off building them any more new houses. I think that sort of thing simply delicious. When I've time, I mean to go in for it seriously. Rooti-Tooti-Lal says he's sure I'm possessed of powers that, if trained, could "penetrate the hidden things of darkness," and that I might hope to attain "the

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final Negation of Moksha." It certainly is a lovely idea.

I'm giving a boy-and-girl dance on Friday for Joan and Hildegarde. The Powers that be are simply most horribly unreasonable as to what they expect of me in this respect. Of course, I love my sisters — it's awfully bad form to dislike your people — and I shall do my best for them. But nothing handicaps a young married woman more than having girls to dispose of.

I'm quite satisfied, so far, with the beginning I've made. All the same, I feel that to get right there I must have a *Cause*. It's *absolutely*. All the most successful women have *platforms* of one kind or another, apart from their social duties.

Stella Clackmannan has taken up Laundry Girls, their work, their hours, what sort of tea they drink, and what sort of books they read. She keeps *three* secretaries to attend to her Laundry-girl correspondence, and every summer she has a starching and ironing show at Clackmannan House, and the gardens and drawing-rooms are full of young laun-

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dresses having tea, each with a brand-new volume of the Duchess's poems; poor things! (I mean the laundry girls.) She also contributes articles on "The Laundry Girl, what is her Future?" to the *Long-winded Review*, though I hear by a side-wind that the grammar and punctuation want a lot of straightening out before they appear.

The Duchess of Dunstable was the patron saint of General Servants, when there *were* such things, and founded the Society for giving workboxes to those who kept their places for a month, or a year, or something. But General Servants have become extinct, I'm told, and the Work-box Society has dissolved.

Then, Lady Clarges is President of the Guild for the Protection of Pavement Dancers, and works quite hard in their cause. Those matinées she gave at the Magnificent, when she appeared as *Hamlet* and as *Romeo*, interpolating some clever specimens of pavement-dancing herself, were in aid of the Guild.

Every one knows what a lot of Causes

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Popsy, Lady Ramsgate, has taken up. The Living Statuary Show she was getting up lately (till it was put a stop to by some one in authority) was for the Deserving Poor, and she's so disappointed about it that she's had to do a rest-cure.

Well, I'm determined to go one better than Stella Clackmannan with her Laundry Girls, old Dunstable and her Workboxes, and Beryl Clarges and her Pavement Dancers. I *have* turned my thoughts to the Suffragette Cause, but only for a moment. It's poky, and middle-class, and sumphish to a degree. Besides, they haven't an earthly. Also, it's my private opinion that the woman who wants a vote has given up all thoughts of getting anything *better* out of life. It's a sort of twentieth century taking the veil.

I've finally decided to take up the Cause of the People, the Many against the Few. "*Socialism*," Babs and the rest of them would say with horror. Why, of course it is! There are thrills in it, I'm sure. And the fact that we de Veres have always been the highest of high Tories will make

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it all the more of a sensation. I think it a grand idea. It came to me through meeting the famous Hungarian Socialist, Outa Telbows, at a guest-night of the All Sorts and Conditions Club. He has the *right* to call himself *Count* Outa Telbows, but Socialists don't use titles. (Norty says they don't use *soap* either, but that's only his chaff.)

He spoke to me of the Cause with impassioned eloquence. He has romantic hair and burning eyes. I feel there must be a great deal in Socialism. If my friends hear of my addressing the Downtrodden Many, and helping to lead them to the Promised Land, they'll go into fits, no doubt, but I can't help that.

Josiah disapproves, *of course*. He's positively *feudal* in his notions. It's the *way* with people who haven't the least right to be!

Friday, May 3rd. — Rollo, returned from Mentone, came in upon us in a state bordering on madness. *A frightful state of things!!* Sir James had found out

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about the secret marriage, and has left Mabel 500*l.* a year, and all the rest to the children of a sister the family had cut — or, failing them, to charity!

It seems Mabel had been blackmailed by a former maid of hers, who, by some odious chance, discovered the marriage almost as soon as it had taken place. Among some letters sent on to Mentone from the town house, was one from this creature and her husband, asking for a sum of money, as they had got into some difficulty, and threatening, unless it was sent soon, to write to Sir James and tell him to have the register of some church at Hackney searched. By some horrible mischance, this letter was taken into Sir James's room with his own, and he opened it before he noticed it was addressed to Mabel.

This discovery, it's evident, brought on the seizure that killed the old man, but not before he'd wired to his solicitor in London to have the register searched; and then made that dreadful Will, and written a few words to Mabel (who was

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quite ignorant of what had happened), telling her what he thought of her conduct. I can't help wishing, for Rollo's sake, that the seizure had come a bit sooner!

May 4th. — Poor, unlucky boy! What *will* he do? He's been launching out more than ever on the strength of Mabel's millions. And now he finds himself with a mountain of debt, and tied fast to an uninteresting girl, who's absurdly fond of him. He tells me that, after the first crash, which prostrated her for some hours, Mabel said, through her tears, "But we *still* have each other!" He groaned as he told me that.

Josiah has said such hard things of both of them, in talking it over with me, that I had to pretend to cry. He stopped at once then, begged my pardon, and said he would see what he could do to help them. Fearfully old-fashioned of him!

If that disky old letter of the poor Prince should crop up, as it may *any* day, what price my manufactured tears?

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I might cry in *earnest* then, I suppose, and make no impression.

Norty came in to-day to talk about the Tragedy. He says it's the most frightful thing that's happened since some great earthquake — I forget where — and I quite agree with him.

May 5th. — Misfortunes always hunt in couples. To-day a packet came to me, which, on being opened, proved to be nothing less than that blotting-book that I've been after so long; and a note from the little thought-reading woman to say she's at home again, and, finding I had not fetched the book, "took the liberty of sending it to me, with her compliments."

I opened it — plunged my hand into the pocket — the letter was gone!

That little person suspected there was some hidden reason for my wanting the thing, found the letter, and now holds it over my head, like Somebody's sword. And now that Rollo's marriage has been made public she'll be madder than ever, and, being unable to revenge herself on



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him, she'll pass it on to me. Whenever I see Josiah, I shall be looking to see if he's had that letter sent to him. What a sweet prospect!

XVIII

THE STARS IN THEIR COURSES — MUSICAL RAPTURES — SOME CHEERY LITTLE AF- FAIRS

Blanche's Diary continued.

Tuesday, May 7th. — Went to my Astrology lesson at the Carlton to-day. A number of us are studying there with Professor Chetalotti, and are quite obsessed with it. We learn all about conjunctions, and occultations, and apogees, and things, and in what way they affect us, and how to set a planetary figure and cast a horoscope. The Professor has done all our horoscopes, and he found that Babs' and Lady Clarges' destinies were under the same constellation. They were just mad with him about it. Babs told him straight that she thought it shabby treatment, considering how high his fees are; and Beryl Clarges said if she couldn't have a

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constellation to herself she'd refuse to pay for her horoscope.

Mine's a lovely one, on the whole, and so's darling Pompom's. I've got to take special care of him when Saturn and I-forget-what are in conjunction, and *I'm* to look out for slight ructions when the moon's in apogee or something; otherwise we're both lucky people. I took occasion to-day to reproach the Professor for having made me too flattering a horoscope, some simply horrid things having happened lately. But he persisted that, in the end, "all would be sunshine," so I feel more cheerful.

Josiah's couldn't be done, because he doesn't know when he was born. Besides, he jeers at it all, and isn't the sort of person that deserves to *have* a horoscope.

Norty's had his done, and he tells me it's a perfectly rotten one, that every constellation in the sky seems to be down on him, and that so many things are "sitting darkly in his House of Life" that it amounts to a bad case of overcrowding, and ought to be looked into by the County Council.

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There's no doubt that, besides being a nice, creepy, mysterious study, Astrology has *immense* possibilities socially. But it must be used *brainily*.

Fluffy has done us all a bad turn, and distinctly lowered the social value of Astrology, by her absurd fiasco of Sunday. She and Goggy were to week-end with the Massinghams, and she got out of it by setting a planetary figure (between me and myself, she sets them all wrong) and announcing that her particular constellation was dead against her going, that Jupiter or one of them was threatening her House of Life, and she must stay at home and take no chances. So Goggy went without her. Sunday morning, off went Fluffy up the river with Piggy de Lacy, punting. And, like a first-class idiot, until they were *passing* the *very spot*, she clean forgot that the Massinghams were at their riverside place.

When she got the hang of things, and saw the whole Massingham crowd, Goggy among them, on the lawn, she urged Piggy on out of the danger-zone, covering herself

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with her parasol. But some one spotted him and sang out, "Hillo, Piggy, who's your fare?" and then she heard them making bets as to whether she was Lil Lightfoot of the Eye-opener, or Di Rouge-more of Bally's. Crouched under her parasol, she used the whip and spurs mercilessly. "*Can't* you put on more pace? How slow you are! You'll give the show away! Whack her along for all you're worth!" — till at last poor Piggy lost what little head he ever has, made a false step, or leaned over too far, and took a sudden header into Father Thames!

Fluffy had to throw concealment to the winds then, and, shrieking dismally, she made feeble grabs for him — the whole Massingham crowd came rushing down the lawn — and behold a rescue and an *éclaircissement* — with all the trimmings!

Goggy didn't turn a hair, Fluffy said. But he scored off her cruelly as they walked up to the house together, Piggy having been taken indoors in a state of semi-collapse. "I begin to think there was a

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good deal, after all, in the excuses you made yesterday," he said. "It's quite evident the planet What's-his-name *did* mean to give you a nasty one, and that you *ought* to have stayed at home and taken no chances."

Poor Rollo came again to-day. He'll have to exchange from the *Prancers* into an Indian regiment. He's very low about it. He says there is a *worse*, more *perverse*, and more *spitefully fatal* feature of the catastrophe, than he has told me, or than any but himself and one other person know of.

I asked if the other person was Mabel? He said, No.

I looked to see if there were any straws in his hair. Poor boy, there well might be, I'm sure! I couldn't get another word out of him.

This afternoon I tried to forget my own and Rollo's woes in the *Sturm und Drang* of the "Ring." This is the *second* cycle I've been to. I wouldn't miss so much as a *demi-semi-quaver* for anything. People who go *home* between the afternoon and

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evening performances aren't worthy of being called true Wagnerites. We, who *are*, don't dream of leaving the house (I don't even leave my *box*) for fear of breaking the *continuity* of our *emotions*. We just have a light dinner served to us, the dishes and wines being carefully chosen, so as not to clog the imagination or divert the *musical perceptions*.

Norty came into my box this afternoon to wait for the evening performance. He said *he* didn't wish to break the continuity of *his* emotions by leaving the house. But he was only kidding; he's no true Wagnerite. I tried to make him see the true inwardness of it all; how it raises one to a higher plane, against which the waves of Being beat in vain, while the soul realizes itself as it floats serene over the abysses of harmony. *That*, at least, is how Wagner's masterpiece always affects *me*; but perhaps mine's an exceptional temperament. I oughtn't to be impatient with more commonplace natures. Norty only laughed, and said his private opinion of the "Ring" is that there's a lot too

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much of it, and that never was so much fuss and noise made before over an *ordinary jewel robbery*.

Josiah dropped in in the evening (think of *dropping in* to the "Ring!"), and made himself horrid to Norty, who happened to be in the box still. I really believe he hates that poor boy, and would cut him if he dared, in spite of it's being entirely through him that Josiah's a member of the Dawdlers and the Sybarites. He cleared up when Norty was gone. But he doesn't know the first thing about Wagner — says "there's a great deal too much *ugly* and not near enough *pretty*." It's really *sad* there should *be* such people. He added, "But I'll try to like it, my dear, as *you* like it." How stodgy and Early Victorian! (Still, it shows that that horrible letter hasn't got into his hands *yet*.)

I heard a simply lovely story of Babs and her small daughter. She brought the kiddy, who is supposed to be a musical genius, to Covent Garden one afternoon, to give her a taste of the higher music.

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Babs the second put in one of her naughty fits (she's her mother's own girl), and, just as the wonderful *Ride* of the *Walkure* was going on, she yelled out, "Why are they called the *Walkers*? — they're *ridin'*!" She was promptly removed from the building.

The number of concerts just now is simply ghastly. It's enough to deafen one merely to see all the announcements. During May and June, London really ought to put cotton-wool in its ears, poor thing!

And the procession of "talented *protégés*" people are always bringing forward! (That's another thing I'm making a note of. I must have a performing *protégé* of some kind.)

The Duchess of Dunstable is booming a girl (daughter of a tenant-farmer or something, down at Sangazur) that she's had trained, who is said to play the *piano* with one hand, and the *harp* with the other, better than any one else can play *either* instrument with *both* hands. And Stella Clackmannan is bringing forward a boy she found somewhere in the wilds of Clack-

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mannanshire, who recites Shakespeare so as *quite* to alter the meaning, and set at rest all *sorts* of vexed questions. They've each wheedled me into taking a row of stalls at the respective performances of these creatures. But I've no notion of just helping towards the success of *other* people's *protégés*. So I'm now on the lookout; and if I should happen across a *boy* who can sing *higher*, or a girl who can sing *lower* than any one else, or a child recently short-coated and able to conduct the band at a Wagner opera, or anything of any kind that has thrills in it, I mean to hire a hall and launch him, her, or it.

Wednesday, May 8th. — I entered my darling Pompom at the Toy Dog Show, and he appeared there in the loveliest wee kennel that was *ever!* — gilt bars in front, and primrose satin cushions with his crest and monogram in seed pearls. But the angel was so uncomfy and grizzly that I brought him away after an hour or two. And to-day, though I described all his points *minutely* to the judges, and was

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just as sweet to the disky creatures as I could be (it's not for me to say *how* sweet that is), they *refused* to judge him and give him a prize in his absence. There *never* was such injustice! I consider them to be *pigs* of the first magnitude.

In spite of the clouds in my sky, my cards are out for a dance, which, I really think, without vanity, touches the high-water mark of originality and *chic*-ness. No one would ever guess where I'm going to give it, though they guessed and guessed again. In the Monkey House at the Zoo! And in the corners of the invite cards I've put: "To meet our Ancestors." It's making a big sensation. Norty's delighted with it, and says it's quite a good idea. Josiah's furious. I shouldn't wonder if a question's asked about it in the House. And if *that* happens my cup of happiness and success will be full, and there will be no more worlds to be conquered.

I hear that the lucky, unknown niece who's got all the Frothingly money (her parents are both dead, and she's no brothers or sisters) is a Miss Amy Robinson. Not

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a very promising name; but she'll have every opportunity of changing it for a better one *now*. Wee-wee says she was very poor, and lying ill when she was discovered, and that she's still ill. What an obstinate illness to stand up against such news as she's had! Old Lady Lacksiller has already found her in her retreat, wherever it is, and, according to Wee-Wee, has taken her in hand, and will show her the ropes in due time. No doubt, too, she will try to secure the girl for her son.

What a pointer that woman is! Wherever you see her, you may know it for a dead cert. that there's money in the neighbourhood.

June 12th. — Darling Pompom was At Home yesterday from 4 to 5.30. His invite cards were things of joy. The dearest, weeniest things, cream and gold with his monogram and crest in colours. A crowd of his little friends came (at least, perhaps I oughtn't to say his *friends*, for the angel tried to bite them whenever they got near enough), and the yellow

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drawing-room was like the Agricultural Hall during a dog show.

Wee-Wee brought her lovely little Siamese spaniel. *There's* a triumph of breeding! It can hardly walk or see! No big doggies were *invited*, but Bosh brought his champion St. Bernard, *Charlemagne*. The dear old boy was very good, and sat as grave as a judge (as people *used* to say, before judges became professional funny men) till refreshments appeared, when he promptly annexed his own share and the shares of all his neighbours. There was a holy scrim among the tiny people, and, amid wailing and gnashing of teeth, Bosh took *Charlemagne* away, waving his tail and licking his chops.

People are telling a funny little story of the Duchess of Dunstable's last dance. It was as well done as *she* ever does anything; there was adequate provision of sitting-out nooks and places where they flirt; and when dancing began the rooms were full. But gradually the dancers thinned down so that people wondered. Were they going on somewhere else? No.

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Were they sitting out? Oh, dear, no! Sitting out isn't good enough now. Where were they all, and what had happened? Why, just this. Half the girls and their partners were off for a spin in taximos. Some of them didn't get back till supper, and had been miles and miles into the country. We really are getting on! Old Dunstable, I hear, put on her best Sunday frown (her own demure Cuckoo was among the culprits with a *perfectly* ineligible partner) and said severely: "If *this* sort of thing is to obtain, it will be sheer waste of money to engage a band." *C'est bien elle!*

There's been a story going about since Ascot that Mrs. Bullyon-Boundermere has split with her bear-leader, because she couldn't get the new woman a card for the Royal Enclosure. Mrs. B.-B. said it was in the bond. Old Lacksiller said it wasn't. So there are rows and rumours of rows.

Limerick Teas are a good deal in the air just now. But you ought to be careful as to the people you ask. There are *lots*

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who can't be made to see the dif. between an ordinary four-line verse and a Limerick. My Limerick Tea this afternoon was a big success. I gave prizes, and Norty's was generally considered to deserve the first prize. Let me see if I can remember it.

Oh! Limerick teas are a bore,
And the cup that once cheered is no more,
For we're all looking down
With a Limerick frown,
And searching for rhymes on the floor.

As pageants are raging everywhere, I feel that London ought to be in the movement, so I'm organizing one, in which I shall take the chief part myself. I asked a lot of people to find some *reason* for a London Pageant just now, and Bosh said (he's awfully clever and well read) that he thought it was on a Monday in June, one or two thousand years ago, that Boadicea took London away from the Romans. So *there's* my pageant! Boadicea with her hair down (only the other day I was wish-

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ing I could show my hair *au naturel*, being past my waist and waving naturally), a golden circlet on her head, big gold bracelets on her upper arms, going on a triumphal car to give thanks for her victory. The pageant will start from Hyde Park Corner, and go right to the Mansion House, where a thanksgiving service with Druid rites will be held. It will come back by another route. We shall wind up with a dinner and dance. Babs and Wee-Wee and Beryl Clarges all say it's *quite* enough for me to do all the *organizing*, and that they can't let me *sacrifice* myself by doing Boadicea as well. They're each of them *quite* willing to do it. But I say No, I mean to go through with it. And now they've turned rather catty about it.

The defeated Roman General, Suet-something, ought to be in the pageant, but I can't get any one to do him. Norty has the right features, but he says he wouldn't care to be "part of a raree-show." That's just like the men, as I told him. They won't endure being stared at, even for a good cause. Now, *I'm*

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prepared to endure all the staring quite patiently.

“ Oh, well, *you're* in training,” he said. “ You're *used* to stares — whole flights of them. But what's the *cause* in this particular case ? ”

“ Why,” I said, “ to teach Londoners about their city. To make them love History.”

“ With *you* representing History,” he answered, “ we shall all find that only too easy ! ”

He's an absurd boy.

I'm up to the eyes in preparations. The best of a far-off period is that one has quite a free hand as to costume. The triumphal car is designed, and I'm choosing my British courtiers and Roman captives.

I should feel perfectly joyous, only that occasionally I remember that wretched letter.

June 20th. — Miss Jermyn was married yesterday. The old dear evidently thought “ Better late than never.” She's one of the best, and a big crowd of us went to

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St. Agatha's to give her a shove-off. The bridegroom, General Dodderidge, is enormously old (he was in the Charge at Balaklava, or the Old Guard at Waterloo, or something), and didn't seem quite to know what they were doing with him; but the wedding went with a roar. The bride, who looked delightfully ugly, was married in her racing colours, and a *deliciously* original bridesmaid waited modestly for her in the porch — her celebrated filly, "Give-'em-beans," in a big white sash, with a posy of orange-blossom tied round her neck. I quite envy Mary Jermyn such a lovely idea!

Every one is so sorry for Lady Mercia about Etheldreda. She *would* go to Newnham and do mathematics, and now she's come out among the Wranglers. It's horrid for all of them. Lady Mercia said to me to-day, with tears in her eyes, "I shouldn't have minded if she'd been plain. She might have gone in for mathematics or anything she liked. But she's the best-looking of them all. It's a *cruel* thing for a mother!"

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It certainly is too bad. It's all very well for a young *man* to go in for all that stuff, he has nothing better to occupy his mind; but for a *girl*, who has a thousand important things to attend to, to waste her youth over such nonsense, is *too* aggravating. Let A be as long as B, and let C be a triangle, indeed! As if any one wanted to prevent it! Etheldreda Saxonbury will find that the end of those things is spinsterhood.

Poor Rollo will go out to India before the autumn comes. Mabel means to go with him. She is in "rooms" in one of those far-away western districts that are always being tacked on to Kensington. I've written to her, and a fearful pull it was, but I've not been to see her yet; the mingling of tears business isn't in my line. And Mabel and I never *did* gee very well. I'm sorry for her, but so much sorrier for Rollo that she hardly counts. Anyhow, she got the man she wanted, while *he's* got nothing at all; worse than nothing, indeed, for *now* he's not got *himself* to dispose of in marriage.

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I was telling Norty to-day that Mabel has got to sell all her jewels in order to get along at all. She had some lovely bits. There's a rope of black pearls that I think I shall buy, and there are heaps of other jewels, for the old man denied her nothing — except Rollo!

Norty said, "She may sell her black pearls, and her diamonds, and every precious stone she's got, now she's so precious stony, but she'll still have a more costly trinket than any of you, or, for the matter of that, than any woman in the world."

"Whatever's that?" said I, feeling rather piqued.

"Why," said Norty, "a wedding-ring that's cost her two millions sterling!"

Norty's quite absurdly jealous of Clinton Vandollarbilt, who brought over his famous trotter, *The Hello Girl*, to the Olympia Show, and has re-named her "Blanche M.," after me.

Norty's my best boy, of course, but Clinton's a nice boy too, and was a distinct addition to our party at Ascot. He and I had a little joint flutter on the Hunt

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Cup, and it came up heads. Josiah thought he *knew something* about the Ascot Stakes, but whatever it was he'd better *not* have done it, for he lost a thou. and his temper.

I mustn't forget that pretty thing Clinton said to me yesterday. I was ragging him about his national spelling, dropping a letter out of words like "favour" and "parlour," and so on. "Well," he said, "I guess you've converted me *some*, Mrs. Multimill, for I'll always think in future that *parlour* looks best with *u* in it, anyway."

Whenever I have time I wonder where that letter is. Has Rollo's Entanglement got it? What does she mean to do with it? And where is she? I've never hinted anything to Rollo on the subject of Shady Hamlet, as he has troubles enough without that. He has evidently not seen her since that queer visit of mine, or she would have mentioned me, no doubt. What has become of the poor little thing, I wonder?

Perhaps the letter has fallen into other hands. Perhaps my dearest and best enemy is doing a gloat over it, and pre-



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paring to send it to Josiah. What a world it is for us women!

The more I know of Josiah the more certain I am that he would never forgive me (much as he thinks of me when he isn't *disapproving*), if he knew I'd been engaged to the poor Prince at the same time as to him. He'd want to get a separation, perhaps. *Could* he, I wonder?

XIX

A QUICK - CHANGE TURN

Amy Robinson's Diary.

May, '07. — What a strange thing life is! Am I in a dream, and shall I wake presently to hear the getting-up bell ringing at Clifgate House School, and to find all my supposed experiences of the past months vanish in the morning light?

Let me try to recall those months.

It was more than a month after Mrs. Multimill came to that little house in Shady Hamlet (*not* out of mere idle curiosity, as I accused her of doing; I knew that later), six or seven weeks after, as far as I can remember, that I grew desperate in my despair and misery. He had not come for a long, long time. I seemed to feel that he would never come any more. One morning, in the Society Column

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of *Daily Thrills*, I read his name as having arrived at some place in the Riviera, among a number of fine people. I made a sudden, wild resolve that I would go to him there, that I would quit for ever that dark, dreadful little house, and all its crowding ghosts of love, of happiness, of hope. I had only a few pounds; I did not even know whether I had enough for my purpose. I went down to Sandstone, meaning to cross to the Continent by the night boat. I would find him. I would try to shame him into making me his wife. I would denounce him to his own world; would tell my miserable story to his friends, and enlist their sympathy. What a wild dream!

My pocket was picked, as far as I can say, at Sandstone station, and I was stranded there destitute. I was so numbed with all I had gone through that I don't think I cared much. It was a cold day with a strong wind blowing, and rain began to fall in torrents as I wandered about, wondering what I should do next. Towards evening, wet through and tired out,

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I crept into one of the deserted glass shelters and sat down. I suppose I fell into a kind of doze, for I rose up with a start when I found a hand on my shoulder and heard a voice speaking to me. They were a woman's hand and voice. She asked me why I sat there in the cold and rain and darkness. I told her I was a young teacher out of employment, that my purse had been stolen on my arrival at Sandstone, and I was destitute. She was a kind lady, foundress and directress, she told me, of a Home for Young Women in Sandstone. She took me there, and I remember nothing more for a long time. The cold and exposure brought on a fever, and they thought for many days that I would die. When I was beginning to mend, and was able to look round me and to realize what was and had been, how bitterly I railed at fate that I had not died!

It was a warm April day when I first crept out of doors again. I crept on till I reached a glass shelter — the very one, I believe, in which I had hidden on that

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cold, dark evening. Numbers of people were out, brightly dressed, laughing, talking, congratulating each other on the fine weather.

“Spring is really come now,” I heard them say. “Doesn’t it make one feel joyous?”

I leaned my head in the corner of the shelter and groaned. I closed my eyes to the sparkling sea and the happy crowds. What was spring to *me*, bankrupt in all that makes life worth having! But we cannot lean our heads in corners and groan for ever; we have to sit up and straighten our faces and our moods — and so did I.

Mechanically I picked up a morning paper that had been left in the seat next mine, and the first thing my eye fell upon, at the top of the Agony Column, was my parents’ names!

“Daniel Robinson, teacher of music, and Amy Frothingly, of Northborough, who were married in London in the year 1885. Any surviving child or children of the above please communicate with Messrs.

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Jackson & Jackson, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London."

I wondered languidly what it portended; a legacy perhaps from one of my mother's rich, unknown relatives. Well, if it were so, I should at least not have to receive charity at the Home any longer, and perhaps I might be relieved of the dread necessity of looking for work when I should grow stronger.

I communicated with Jackson & Jackson, and was asked to call in Lincoln's Inn Fields. I told them at the Home that I had a situation in view, and must go to London. They tried to dissuade me from seeking work till I was stronger. But I persisted, and Mrs. Harrison advanced me the money for my journey. I went to Lincoln's Inn Fields, and there, when my identity was fully established, I learned that the great brewer, Sir James Frothingly, was not merely a distant relation, as I had thought, but was my mother's brother, and that I, her only child, had inherited his enormous fortune! I did not faint or collapse, weak as I was; but I

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murmured to myself, "This is a very strange dream! I wonder when I shall wake."

Within a week I was living in a suite of rooms in a quiet Kensington hotel, and had engaged a sort of maid-companion. And now the fatigue and excitement told upon my enfeebled frame, and I was very ill again. But I did not wish to die now. True, the happiness I had dreamed of a year ago at Clifgate was all shattered to pieces, and with it my old, innocent, romantic self. Nevertheless, I had begun to realize that, in my new position, life still held great things. The observance and kindness I received on all sides was beginning to have its effect on me. From despair, destitution, utter hopelessness, with the world's terrible face looking down upon me in anger and contempt, I had been suddenly raised to a height from which I looked down upon the *world*, and the once terrible face was turned up to me all covered with smiles.

When I was able to lie on a sofa in the sitting-room window, I found that I had

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become something of a celebrity. A man from *Daily Thrills* had called at the hotel every day to interview me. In some mysterious way he had discovered that I had been a teacher at Clifgate School, and had gone down there and seen the Head and some of the staff. To my surprise, I read that the Head had valued me greatly as a teacher, and had been very sorry to lose me (she believed the air of Clifgate had not suited me), and that the staff, to a woman, had loved me as a sister!

I sent back, in the name of Brown by which they had known me, the sum advanced to me at the Home at Sandstone; and shortly afterwards sent them two hundred pounds anonymously.

It was just at this time that a middle-aged lady called to see me. She was very kind and pleasant, and introduced herself as the Countess of Lacksiller. She came often to see me, and became quite a friend. And then she offered, very delicately and tactfully, to tell me things I ought to know, and to introduce me to the great world that my new position gives me a

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right to enter. Though she says that, with youth, beauty, gentle manners, and a soft voice, there is not very much that I require to learn. She is very nice. I like her very much, and am most fortunate in having her for a friend. She is a widow with one son, the present Earl of Lacksiller, and a daughter married and living abroad. She is going to help me form such an establishment as I ought to have. A furnished house is to be taken at Toftburn Wells, and I am to live there till I am stronger. She is to stay with me.

One day, as she sat talking, she said, "Poor Rollo de Vere and his wife! What a *bouleversement* it is for them!"

I felt myself turn deadly pale at hearing him mentioned, and at hearing that he was married, but being such an invalid it passed unnoticed; and as she went on talking I learned the strange truth — the most wonderful, the most incredible part of all this wonderful, incredible dream.

After thinking long on the subject, I have written to him at the Club I used to



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write to. Only a few words, saying I have buried the past in silence and forgetfulness, that I look to him to do the same; and that if we should ever meet in the world that is now my world as well as his, it will be as strangers. I signed it merely "A."

XX

SOCIAL SUCCESS ASHORE AND AFLOAT — THE SIMPLE LIFE

Blanche's Diary.

July 25th. — The season is at its last gasp, and, looking back on it, I really do think I've some cause for putting on frills. Myself, my parties, my frocks, fads, *Causes*, and everything that is mine, have been more paragraphed, photo'd, and preached about than any one or any one's — which was required to be done, as I believe school-books say. And of all my triumphs I think I'm proudest of having had King Battibash to dinner. Ours was *absolutely* the only private house he dined at; and I *do* consider it's by way of being a *tour de force* to have everything *exactly* as he's accustomed to have it for a King who has his dinner laid on the floor, and eats it

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with a long stick; also to provide *just* the music he likes by setting a number of the servants to beat big tin basins and blow whistles. Before he left, his interpreter told us his Majesty had *never* enjoyed himself so much since he was converted! And when he suggested in dumb show that I should go back with him to Battibashikana, it was only his South Pacific way of thanking us and saying good-bye. So *absurd* of Josiah to say he felt like kicking him out of the window.

There's been a good deal of talk, too, about my Go-as-you-please dinners — no precedence or taking in, but, as soon as dinner's announced, a race for the dining-room and a scramble for seats; later on, a grape-throwing sweepstake, in which whoever gets home oftenest (that is, throws a grape right into some one else's mouth) takes the pool.

I was nearly made a widow by this little sport. Just as Josiah was laughing at one of his own jokes, Wee-Wee threw a grape such a long way down his throat that he had a narrow squeak for it.

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Hildegarde has made quite a little success as a *débutante*. She's a good little girl, with decided symptoms of prettiness. Her only fault is that she's absurdly like me, and I object to family likenesses on principle, as having a *cheapening* effect. I've been a model elder sister, and have seen to her frocks, which are just as chic and fussy as if she'd been out for years. Now that young girls have learned to run without blinkers, it's high time the bread-and-butter note was eliminated from their dress: indeed, Olga Fiton tells me that the little, simple, white-chiffon-with-white ribbons, I'll blush-if-you-speak-to-me evening frock is only in demand now among dowagers.

Talking of dowagers, Popsy, Lady Ramsgate has played a fine prank. She's been moting through some outlandish place, and has positively had the luck to be captured by that darling Rinaldo, the famous brigand. He demands an *immense* ransom for her; but Lord Ramsgate says his mother got captured on purpose, and he won't pay anything.

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We're hit already over this horrid Compensation of Servants affair. My new maid, Yvonne, helped herself to one of my evening frocks while I was out, and went to a five-shilling ball in it. She caught a frightful cold. When she gets well she says she will sue me for heavy damages, as my pink tulle-de-soie was thinner than any of her own evening dresses!

Let me see. Is there anything more worth setting down about this expiring season? Oh, yes; expression of face. A slightly puzzled look, with the lips parted in a half-smile, has been quite popular. The baby-stare is out, and wide smiles are distinctly *démodés*. A small, tired smile is *always* correct as the season wanes. Of course, I'm speaking of those who dare to have any expression at all. There are lots of women (not so young as they would like to be) who simply banish both joy and sorrow, for fear of what a poet would call "Lines on a fair face." It's no use bestowing any of one's little funniments on these people. They preserve a stony aspect,

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and murmur, scarcely moving their lips, "My dear, I wish you wouldn't tell me things like that. My beauty-doctor absolutely forbids me to smile. It wears the face most frightfully."

I hear there's been a bit of a burst-up at the Mainwarings'. I've thought things were looking fishy there for some time. Though Fluffy's been distinctly catty to me once or twice, I'm sorry for her; but if people *will* exceed the speed limit, they must expect a smash. Last time I saw her was at a squash at Clackmannan House. She called across the room to me to meet her at Rumpelmayer's for tea the next afternoon; but she forgot to remember, and never turned up.

This season has been a dismal failure for Aunt Goldmont. The Slow Set looks shy at her since she married Norty, and she can't play up to the lively ones, so there she is! Her parties have been *easily* dullest, and Norty's set never goes near them. She's shut up her town house now and gone down into Devonshire. I hear she's taking organ lessons at a village

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church, which I consider a very *serious* sign with any one. My observation of life has shown me that, when you hear of people taking *organ* lessons, you may consider it either a symptom that something is *quite* wrong with the works, or else a tacit admission of total failure socially.

This afternoon I spoke at a Socialist meeting. It was at a ghastly place somewhere in the East End, and I took care to provide myself with one of the disinfectant fans supplied by Fallalerie of Bond Street, for the use of people with *Causes*. My toilette was very carefully thought out — ash-grey chiffon (the new shade called “It might have been”) over grey glacé, grey-chip picture hat with long ostrich plumes to match, shoes and gloves *en suite*. The whole meant, “Though far removed from you, I plead your Cause.” The proper touches of Socialist colour were given by a cluster of red roses in the corsage, and a collar of cabochon rubies. Outa Telbows, my romantic Hungarian Socialist Count, gave one of his fiery ad-

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dresses in his queer English, and then I said a few words.

I told them to insist on having their rights, to insist on having better houses and better food, to demand better clothes:

"Right oh, Lidy!" yelled out a fearful girl in an apron. "'And over that 'at and fevvers then, will yer? I could do with it fine." And there was a roar of laughter.

I'll never address the creatures again. Outa Telbows, seen by good daylight, has knock-knees, I find, and his eyes aren't so handsome as I thought they were.

Almost I think I've done with Socialism, and shall drop The People as a Cause.

On board the "Blanche," August. — Here I am aboard my namesake, which is a fine, big steam-yacht, with triple-expansion things somewhere (quite a baby liner, in fact), and a lovely deck for dances and afternoon teas. I must say Josiah has done us well. The saloon is a peach, and out of it opens a darling, wee boudoir, done in white brocade and ivory — a compliment to me.

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Cowes was much the same as usual. One seemed to be landing, or going on board again all day, and on the Squadron Lawn were the same people one's been meeting in town every day for the last three months.

The Regatta, of course, I pay no attention to. Of all aggravating, uninteresting things, regattas are easily worst. Everything's such an immense way off, and it's all so slow, and vague, and stupid. Then, the regatta-fiend, who always has his glasses at his eyes, and whose conversation is sprinkled with booms, and spinakers, and sail-area, and luffing, and wearing, and all that stuff, is of all bores the most trying. This is the creature who, in an absurdly fresh, breezy, excited state, comes rushing up to you with: "*Wasn't* that a ripping win of *Sylvia's* this morning? *Wasn't* she beautifully handled? Did you notice, when she was brought round in stays, three points off the wind?" — and all that sort of thing, when, very likely, one was playing bridge all night, and didn't come on deck till the afternoon.

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It's certain that I'm no enthusiastic yachswoman. *No* true woman is. There! I tell all and sundry, if they should ever pick up this diary of mine, that *no womanly* woman loves the sea, and if she says she does, she's an old or a young pretender. It's *essentially* a man's element. It has no mercy on the little vanities, and fripperies, and fal-lals that make *our* lives beautiful. Why, you come on deck sweetly got-up (or, in the language of the Solent, "dandy-rigged") to receive visitors for tea, and in two-two's, most likely, your fetchingest little adornment is on the horizon. Also, a woman must be perfectly *genuine* (not that this is a point that troubles *me*, of course) to get anything out of yachting. And when I say genuine, I don't mean truthful and sincere — *that* is simply a matter of taste ashore or afloat. I mean *physically* genuine. She must have a *real* complexion, able to bear the "fierce light that beats upon a yacht," as one of the poets says, and a good head of naturally waving hair, to defy the vindictive sea-breeze. *Particularly* nice feet and ankles

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are also a positive *necessity* for getting in and out of boats, and going up and down companion-ways and things. And, unless a woman is well found, to use a sea phrase, in these respects, she'd better let yachting alone, though Greenfern may have worked wonders for her in blue or white serge.

With men it *may* be a sport, and a matter of luffing, and wearing, and speed, and sail-area. But with us (and I don't care *what* the out-and-out yachting women say to the contrary) it resolves itself, like every other sport, into the questions: How shall I look? Can I come through the ordeal? *Lots* try to come through it who can't, and then there's another Tragedy of the Sea.

There was that pretty little widow, Grace Trevor, who was rather successful in London, and wound up the season by getting engaged to Lord Ninian Ffollyott. She had a pretty, childish way of throwing back a lock of hair from her forehead, and looking dreamily upward. It became quite a small rage, and heaps of people were throwing back locks of hair from

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their foreheads, and looking dreamily upward, who were quite unsuited by nature to do so. Grace Trevor and Lord Ninny were guests for the week on the Middle-shires' yacht, *Godiva*. And now I hear that, when they were cooing on deck one morning, a sudden squall tore off Grace's yachting cap and carried it out to sea — and the famous lock along with it. It's a horrible story. Babs says the engagement's off.

Lady Clarges sailed her own yacht. She's been through a course of lessons, and holds a mariner's certificate that she's absurdly proud of. She looked very workmanlike, though not at all chic, in her sou'-wester and big pea-coat, shouting orders through a megaphone. I heard she ran into one or two things.

Among my regatta guests on the *Blanche* I've had Kiddy Vavasour and his Yankee girl, Desdemona Blogg of Pittsburg. (It was her "Pop" who made our Government an offer for Domesday Book to put in his collection.) They're to be married in a week or so, and Desdemona has a

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lovely idea for her wedding. They're *all* to be on stilts — the bride, the groom, the maids, the "ushers," and as many of the guests as will consent to be.

Owing to this, she's had to give up her wish of being married by some bishops. But after a search they found a *curate* who was willing to learn the stilts, and he's now learning, and hurting himself *dreadfully*, they say. However, he'll be consoled by an enormous fee — that is, unless his bishop gets wind of it and dis-establishes him, or whatever it is they do to them.

As to the *entertaining* during Cowes week, I'm glad to be able to set down in this, my own own chronicle, that I crowded on canvas and sailed away from the lot with my Mermaids' Ball.

Josiah was called away on business, and I sent out cards for "the first calm, warm night" — sea-green, printed in silver. I had the most *delicious* mermaid's ball-gown that was *ever* — (at least, it wasn't exactly a *gown*, but never mind that). It was sewn with iridescent paillettes,

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and the *decolletage* done with shells and seaweed. My hair was down, of course, and twined with shells and seaweed also. Instead of a fan I carried a little mirror with a frame of shells. The calm, warm night came along all right, and we were rowed into shallowish water, where we chose our ballroom, and Desdemona and I received the mermen and mermaids bidden to frolic with us. She was got up like me, only her hair doesn't wave naturally, and she found waving-pins but a *reed* to lean on in the circs. The ballroom was lit by electric torches held in boats, the dance-music was supplied by a big gramophone, and supper was on floating tables. All Cowes was talking about it next day.

Broadlands, September. — I've a houseful of people here all pledged for a week to the simple life and rural joys.

We do a lot of hoop-bowling here. It has quite caught on since I first introduced it, and there are almost as many house-parties for *hoop-bowling* this autumn

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as for shooting. Several clubs have started, but there's only *one correct* one to belong to — *The Hoop and Stick*. The Broadlands Rules are generally adopted. Babs and George, who are always on the look-out to see where they can make a bit, have got ready a nice little shilling volume, "The Cult of the Hoop and Stick," in which they give a list of the clubs, the Broadlands Rules, the different kinds of strokes that are legitimate, with plates showing how the hoop-stick should be held, and a little History of Hoop-bowling from the time, thousands of years ago, when an Egyptian king used to bowl a hoop up and down the *ballium*, or whatever they called their gardens. And now, just as their little volume is ready to appear, they find that a journalist person has already in the press "The Hoop-Bowlers' Handbook," which takes the wind clean out of their sails. It's too mortifying! They may go to law about it. I've had a lovely hoop-bowling alley laid out here, and we bowl our hoops, wet or fine. The proper dress for it, in which I've set the

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fashion, consists of a sort of bloomer costume, with tall bronze boots and a baby-boy's hat. A pretty woman with nice feet and ankles looks devy! *Some* people are immensely *precious* in their hoop-bowling. Wee-Wee's hoop is gilt all over, and her hoop-stick has any number of jewels. Myself, I think a plain polished hoop and natty ivory hoop-stick, with the crest and monogram in gold, the most workman-like and snappy.

They haven't had a dull moment since they've been here. That's *like* me. I can throw myself into fun for others, and put my own *arrière pensée* in the corner for the time. Even a cold I managed to catch I turned to account, for I sent out cards for a Sneezing Party — every one within mote of us who had a cold — and gave prizes: a weeny gold thermometer-charm for the one who sneezed oftenest, and a still weenier one for the runner-up. A local person got the first. I believe he'd taken snuff or something.

One evening we were rather hard up for something to play at, so we had a game

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of "I-twig-you-by-your-nose." A sheet with a slit in it was hung across the arch of the small white drawing-room, and a number of them were to put their noses through the slit for "friends in front" to guess at. Croppy put his nose through, and I called out "Piggy's." They've both been on their hind legs about it since. And the best of it is that there's nothing to choose between their noses; they both have what I should call *funny* noses, decidedly cheaply run up. But for the rest of the evening they were taking angry, furtive looks at each other's profiles, and Croppy came to me to say in confidence, "Come now, Blanche! Honest Injun! You were paying me off for some old score when you pretended to mistake *my* nose for *that* fellow's, now weren't you?" And a little later it was Piggy with, "I *say*, you know, I don't set up to have much of a nose; but I *say*, you know, it's a bit rough on me to have *that* fellow's taken for mine!" They're both quite cool to me now, and I thought those two so good-natured, and without a particle

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of vanity! It only shows that you never *really* know what people are till you touch them, metaphorically speaking, on their noses, and that there's *no* feature about which more self-deception exists!

Josiah *would* have us go for a picnic one day. That's his old-world notion of a function suitable for the country. It was no use telling him that picnics are as dead as the dodo, and nobody goes for them now. He said, "All the more room for *us*." He's not so easy to manage as he used to be, and that magic phrase, "It's not done," doesn't always produce the desired effect *now*.

He has to have his way sometimes, if it's not *too* impossible, so I apologized to all of them for inflicting such a thing as a picnic on them, and we went to the ruins of an old bore of a castle ten miles off, and had our lunch near it.

"The pleasantest day I've had since I've been at Broadlands," said Aunt Goldmont pointedly, while we were having lunch. (I'm bound to say she didn't *look* much as if she were enjoying herself.) "I must

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thank you, Mr. Multimill, for thinking of anything so pleasant and interesting."

There's a speech to let loose among a lot of picnic people who haven't done any harm! Since her marriage with poor Norty has proved such a dead failure, it seems to me she's going back into her old formal ways, as she was before she came to stay with us, and I shook her up and got her out. This lovely speech was aimed at *me*, because of the little games I've been so successful in getting up of an evening.

"Well," I said, "myself, I don't quite see why a whole crowd should be brought ten miles, and made to eat their lunch in the open, just because one or two like ruins sauce with their chicken and ham."

"It has a history though, that old place," said Bosh, who's the only really learned one among us. "All sorts of queer games went on there once — or *twice*. Dare say, if we explored the old place, we'd find no end of dungeons, and secret passages, and oubliettes."

"What's an oubliette?" some one asked.

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"Oh," said Bosh, "a hole made in the floor, that dropped you down into the moat. In those days that was how they provided for their bores and people who told the same story more than once."

"We could do with some now," said Norty.

"Yes," said Wee-Wee. "Bosh, we must have some oubliettes in *our* new house."

"When do Queen Elizabeth and Charles the First come in?" asked Norty, who was balancing an empty champagne bottle in his hand. "I'm saving this for the head of the person who will presently tell us that Queen E. or King C. slept one night in the room over what was once the chief entrance, or in a suite of apartments, now demolished, in the west wing. I've never been near *any* ruins and places where they picnic, without some one weighing in sooner or later with those items of information."

"Yes, isn't it awful?" said some one else. "From the amount of sleep those two seem to have put in at different ruins, I should think they suffered from beri-beri."

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"There's a beautiful specimen of an early Norman door in what remains of the south front, said Aunt Goldmont in a tone of reproof, and addressing herself exclusively to Josiah.

"Well, what of that?" said Norty. "An early door's nothing to gas about. Every theatre has one."

After lunch we'd a very good game of shy with the empty bottles, and then hide-and-seek among the ruins. Aunt Goldmont, mellowed a little by cham., deigned to join in hide-and-seek. But it didn't quite come off. She hid somewhere or other, but nobody went to look for her, so after a time she had to come out — which, of course, is a bit flat.

Her temporary skittishness had *more* than worn off by the time we went home. After we got back we had a lovely Soap-bubble Tournament. Several very big ones were blown, but *Bosh* blew such an enormous one that he was quite exhausted, and Wee-Wee had to fetch her salts to revive him.

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Babs tells me that the obscure little niece who's got the Frothingly millions is at Toftburn Wells, where she has taken a house, and will stay till her health is recovered. Old Lacksiller has quite installed herself there, and bosses the show entirely. In due time, when the girl is strong again, and sufficient polishing and drilling has been done, she will be led upon the stage of social life by the *pointer*. Babs is vexed about old Lacksiller having got the job. *She* would have been quite willing to take the girl in hand. "I could have coached her a million times better than the old pointer," she said. "George and I are most successful, as you know, in licking barbarians into shape. And though I own Miss Amy Robinson is a very bad case, I'd have handled it more skilfully than the old pointer has."

"You've seen her then?" I said.

"Oh, yes," said Babs. "She's young and pretty, but it's not the right *sort* of prettiness — too much sugar for one cup. Those great eyes and that bud of a mouth make one think involuntarily of long rows

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of 'drinks' and piles of uneatable 'refreshments,' or else of the 'extras' in the latest musical comedy. As a matter of fact, though, I believe she's more hopeless material than *those* even, for they say she was a teacher in a school. Her style, my dear, is positively *atrocious* — I don't mean in dress, of course, for the old pointer has seen to that; but she's conscious of her clothes, conscious of herself, conscious of her new importance, uneasy, affected, and always seems to have an eye on old Lacksiller to make sure the lesson is being properly said. *I'd* have brought her up to concert pitch better. If she'd really been a bar-girl or a stage-girl, she wouldn't have been such a bad case. George and I find the biggest job we can take on is a middle-class 'young lady' or 'young gentleman.' They've such a giddy lot to unlearn — the *weirdest* manners and customs that they're firmly convinced are *absolutely*."

XXI

“BREKKY” — THE LATEST RIDDLE — OF BARGES AND CARAVANS

Blanche's Diary continued.

Sept. 10th. *Broadlands.* — They're all gone, and for a few days we've a *solitude à deux*. Very awful. I've such a lovely idea for next spring. I'm going to bring *Breakfast* into fashion again. People have been a bit shy of it, because it had the reputation of being such an *intellectual* function. Well, who's afraid? I mean to bring Brekky into line once more, and give it all its old rights.

I shall give *Literary* Breakfasts (I shall be quite at home *there*, for I've marked literary tastes, and should write novels if I had time), and Scientific Breakfasts, and I *may* give Theosophic Breakfasts, and have Rooti-Tooti-Lal and some of

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those Universal Brothers at the same time. What fun it would be to see the Brahmin and the Theosophists fight it out! I shall *certainly* give *Astronomy* Breakfasts, and have a lot of those dear, clever things who sit up all night with the moon and stars, and think a night quite *wasted* if they don't discover *at least* a new *comet*. I take a simply enormous interest in astronomy, especially now there's so much talk of getting to Mars. What delicious thrills to be in the first party that starts. But astronomers don't seem to know even *yet* just what it is they see on Mars. They're always quarrelling about it, and ending up with "You're another!" If *I* could get my eye to one of their big telescopes I'd soon settle the question!

I'm responsible for the latest riddle and its answer. When is London fullest? When it's empty. This is how it arose.

Passing through town a week or two back, between some visits, I ran across Tommy Hurlingham.

"Studying Shakespeare's *Deserted Village*?" he said. (I didn't know he *could*

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say anything so *literary*.) And so, after we'd chatted a few moments, he said, "What d'you say to eloping with me to the Balkan States — for dinner?"

Well, Eve looked at the apple and sniffed its aroma. "It would be rather fun," she said. "And we shouldn't meet any one we know."

"Not a soul!" said the Serpent. "We should see the Country Cousin, the whole Country Cousin, and nothing but the Country Cousin. We should be swamped, submerged in barbarians."

So the Serpent called a taximo, and Eve got in, and they eloped to the Balkans. Sitting at dinner, very comfy and chatty, I happened to look at a table a little way off, and saw — Mrs. Croppy Vavasour! "Who's that she's dining with?" I asked Tommy, who had a better view. "Is it Croppy?"

"N-no," said Tommy. A moment later I saw some one *else* that I knew; and then Tommy saw a man *he* knew; and, in short, though *Nobody* swarmed in the Balkans that evening, *Somebody* was a

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good deal in evidence too, and not at all pleased to be often catching sight of *Somebody Else!*

So that's how my riddle arose. London's emptiness had proved attractive, and the expectation of meeting *no one* led to meeting *every one!*

Rollo has sailed for India, and Mabel's gone with him. Poor boy! It's a hideous fate for him. If only he had had his hand read, or his horoscope cast by Chetallotti long ago, he might have been warned as to what rotten luck he was likely to have, and what a crowd of simply *beastly* things were "sitting darkly in his House of Life."

Sept. 20th. — The inevitable reaction against going everywhere at top speed arrived some little time ago, and nothing's been more *chic* than a caravan or a barge. Instead of boasting about how *quickly* we can go to places, we've gone to the other extreme. Babs, who has a lovely barge, and has been taking parties on it, is quite proud of the fact that, when

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she was asked to the Middleshires' place last month, it took her a week's barging to get there.

If you've *any* poetry in you, or any of those ideas that are so profound that you can't even make anything of them *yourself*, barging will bring it all out. Little Ray Rymington has followed up his *Caravan Chansons* with a volume of Barge Ballads. Every one's reading them. One of the most admired verses runs: —

“As I gaze at the horse plodding on,
plodding on,
As the towing-rope dips and I
glide on the stream,
The World, with its madness and
sadness, is gone,
And, barging, I dream.”

I don't like the metre, and I told him so; but he says it's all right, that it's written in *anæsthetics*.

I've had such a lovely week caravanning with Bosh and Wee-Wee. Their living-vans are things of sheer joy. She

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and I got ourselves up for gipsies, and called ourselves Faa (that's the proper name to have if you're a gipsy — I'm not sure whether I've put enough a's into it). It used to be simply delicious arriving in the evening at one of those sleepy, out-of-the-world villages in the *Hundred* of Something, where there are Roman remains, and you can't get anything fit to eat; and lighting our fire, after we'd drawn up our vans on the village green or somewhere, and cooking and all that. Bosh refused to make himself look picturesque, and rather spoil things.

We'd only one unpleasant happening, and that was when we fell in with (and fell *out* with) some *real* gipsies — most shocking creatures, who slanged us in a horrid jargon that Bosh said was *Romany*.

But the Vivvy Flummerys have had an even horrider adventure caravanning. It was at a remote little place, and while they were drawn up for the night their horses were stolen. So there they were *plantés là!* Vivvy and their men went off to look for the horses, and poor Dotty

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was left all alone by herself; lots of village creatures with high colours and yellow teeth coming round to stare at the vans, and making remarks on her whenever they caught sight of her. Dotty, being one of those timid, tearful little women that one meets sometimes even *to-day*, got frightened, and thought perhaps they'd put her into the pound, or the stocks, or something; and when Vivvy came back she cried and clung to him, and said he must never, never leave her like that again! He hadn't found the horses, or heard anything of them; and a beadle, or whatever they call it, came out of the village, with all the yokels following him, and told them they'd got to clear off — the Lord of the Manor didn't allow caravans there for more than one night, or some nonsense of that kind. "But how can we clear off without our horses?" said Vivvy. "I don't know anything about that," said the fellow. "You've got to clear off." (What maddening creatures these yokels are! Talk of *Back to the Land*, indeed! If it makes people so

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stupid and aggravating, better *not* go back to it, I should say.) "Speak more civilly," said Vivvy. "D'you know I'm So-and-so?" "Oh, I dare say!" said the creature, while all the other yokels set up a guffaw. "All you show-people give yourselves fine names. Why not say you was the Prince of Wales at once? 'Ere comes a gentleman riding along as'll soon make you clear off — this is the Lord of the Manor, this is."

And so it was, and it was also Jack Mainwaring, and there was a great meeting, and the yokels abased themselves in the dust!

Both caravanning and barging have one great advantage — they're very becoming; they give a restful, contented expression, and stamp out that look of horror and expectation of instant death that high-speed motoring gives some people. Josiah says he'll have some lovely vans built, and we'll go caravanning together next summer. But I tell him that's not the idea in caravanning, and that he really *must* get rid of that notion that we're always

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to be together, and do everything in a duet. "We shall get on much better," I said, "if we don't see too much of each other. Look at the Croppy Vavasours! What a comfortable couple *they* are! And not long ago they passed each other as strangers at Waterloo Station, because, since they last met, *he'd* grown a beard, and *she'd* got different-coloured hair and the new expression."

"Well," he said, "that's not my idea of marriage, and never will be. The Tresyllyans go caravanning together, and *they're* married."

"Yes," I said, "but Bosh and Wee-Wee are a couple in a thousand. They're regular pals *in spite* of being married."

I've got a new pet. I hope darling Pompom won't get ill with jealousy. It's an enormous tropical spider — the sweetest creature! — with a dozen eyes and equally full measure as to legs. I've had the daintiest, tiny, gold-wire harness made for it, studded with jewels, and a slender gold chain attaches it to a bracelet or a ring. Its diet is chiefly *fly*; I'm always catching

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them for it, and every one who loves me goes and does likewise. The darling has one *supreme* merit. Aunt Goldie is so frightened of it that she left us in a hurry. She says that if it bit her she'd have to keep on dancing the tarantella till she died. She needn't be afraid. The biggest and most awful spider in the world, putting in its very *best* work, couldn't make *her* dance!

I call it *Jack*, but Norty says I've just as much reason for calling it *Jill*. He *does* say such absurd things!

I'd a bit of a fright this morning. Josiah came into the room looking glum, with an open letter in his hand. I thought at first it was that horrible letter that's going round loose somewhere. However, it wasn't. It was only something to do with the money market, and tight and loose money, and the recent alarums and excursions in Dollarland. They want Josiah to lend some money, I fancy, and he doesn't feel like doing it.

XXII

THE "SECOND OCTOBER" — A "PAPER WEDDING"

Newmarket. Saturday, October 19th. — The Second October meeting is over, and I'm in charity with all the world, for I had a little flutter on the Cesarewitch, and it came up heads, and I'm simply rolling.

A few people have worn velvet during the week (a *velvet* autumn generally follows a *lace* summer), but, at Newmarket, Sport is spelled with a big S, and frocks take a back seat.

The heroines of the week are *Give-'em beans* and Mary Jermyn. (I always forget to remember she's Mrs. Dodderidge. She has put her old General somewhere to be taken care of, and is just as free as she ever was.) With her recent triumph, *Give-'em-beans* closes her racing career, and is

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leaving "the Profession," to subside, next spring, into domestic life. To celebrate this, Mary Jermyn gave a hen-party, which was great fun. There was a huge wedding-cake all done with sugar-beans, and with a statuette of the mare in sugar on the top. The equine trousseau was on view, and we all took presents, and drank her health, hoping she won't figure out as one of the "slack mothers" so much in evidence some time ago. She was self-possessed and gracious, quite an ideal hostess, and showed such a keen appreciation of her own wedding-cake that, had she been allowed a free hand (or rather hoof), she'd have finished it. Dear old girl! I hope I may ever have one as good, now I'm going in for the Turf myself. People may say what they like about the horse gradually becoming a back-number. I don't believe it will ever happen. In spite of motors on land, botors on the sea, and flotors in the air, a true Briton will always find thrills in something that can gallop.

I've had a lot of trouble in coaxing Josiah to let me become an owner. But

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I've promised and vowed that, as soon as I've won a Derby, I'll be satisfied and will *drop my gees!*

Croppy and Norty Vavasour and two more of them, Freddy and Billy, who've gone into business as trainers here at headquarters, have advised me and bought for me at the Doncaster Sales. I've a lovely lot of yearlings, with all the proper strains, *Blair Athol* and *Pocahontas* and all that sort of thing, and No. 19 blood, and the *Ormonde* touch; and I've an own sister to *Pretty Polly* and a son of *Flying Fox!* They've all got Derby engagements, for I'm out to win the Derby and nothing less. Before I "fold my arms like the Arabs and as silently steal away," I must know what it feels like to carry off what Milton calls "the blue riband of the Turf." I'm already thinking what sort of frock I'll wear to lead the winner in. But who's to know what kind of sleeve or skirt will be correct then? It's a horrid age to wait. I must own that, when I first saw my high-class youngsters, I found them a bit disappointing — so frightfully *leggy*. How-

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ever, that will improve every day, and, as Croppy says, when you buy racehorses, it is a deal in legs and not much else.

I've had all their horoscopes done by Professor Chetalotti, and he thinks there's a Derby among them somewhere, but he won't say more. That's the worst of these star-people; they never will make themselves really useful, and spot a winner!

Freddy and Billy are my trainers. I don't know whether I shall race as myself or as "Mr. White." My colours are white and silver. Oh, for the day when I shall see one of my little lot come round "the Corner" and roll home a winner to the cheers of a Derby crowd!

Popsy, Lady Ramsgate, has been very much about during the week, wearing a scarlet-cloth Newmarket coat faced with black, gaiters to match, and a black bowler hat with scarlet band. She generally had the new jockey in tow.

Josiah, who is still very Early-Victorian, can't bear the sight of her. "What are things coming to?" he said. "At her age

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she ought to be having a nap at the fireside in a shawl and curls."

"Oh, well," I said, "the curls are there all right enough, but the fireside isn't good enough for our sporting old girls to-day; and the only nap they care for is one on the next race."

The sensation of the meeting has been the riding of this wonderful new jockey — an Eskimo, only three feet high, but full-grown and very strong. He sits *right on the horse's head*, and is bound to cut out the American style, just as that cut out ours. He can never be cut out himself, for, of course, when you've got right on the horse's head, there's no farther to go! He was the guest of honour for the week at Rowley Lodge, and every one's been petting and spoiling him, especially Popsy, Lady R., who's been teaching him bridge, and English, and the cake-walk, and I don't know what other accomplishments. Being so small, he doesn't have to starve like other jockeys, and he sat at dinner every night in a child's high-chair, doing just as he pleased and snatching at whatever he

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wanted. But everything he does is right. *Some* people go so far as to say that three feet is *quite* tall enough, and several of us are learning Eskimo, which seems a sweet thing in languages, consisting chiefly of grunts with an occasional choke. Freddy and Billy are trying to get first claim on him for me.

Apropos of the redoubtable Popsy, she's romancing in a most *ricky* way about her adventures when captured by the famous brigand, Rinaldo, and the daring and address she showed in escaping. As to adventures, nobody believes she had any; and as to her escape, when he found there was no ransom and that no one cared whether she was free or not, he simply sent her away. However, the "Eye-Opener," the "Gorgeous," and some other halls offer her big money for a turn to be called "My Captivity with Rinaldo;" and she's wild with joy, and has ordered her frock — pink satin, cut low in the corsage and high in the skirt, to be worn with black shoes and stockings, black elbow-gloves, and an immense pink satin hat, with half-a-dozen long black ostrich plumes.

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Norty said rather a good thing to his new Yankee sister-in-law the other day. Desdemona was cracking up the land of her birth, and criticizing the land of her marriage, according to custom, and, among other things, she said she considered us English a *dull* nation (though she'd the grace to "except present company"). "Oh," said Norty, "*dull* is a hard word. Perhaps we may be a bit *serious*, but that's only to be *expected*, seeing that an *Englishman* discovered *gravity*!"

People were telling a funny little stori-ette about Beryl Clarges at Newmarket this week. She has a good deal of influence at the War Office, and the other day she wrote to the authorities asking to go in Nulli Secundus on its next aerial flight (this was before it crumpled up). She got an answer saying the military airship never carried any one but the three experts, and the authorities could not see their way to — and so on. Nothing daunted, Beryl wrote again, saying she would do nothing to incommode the experts, and, as she only weighed seven stone, she couldn't think

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that her presence would make any difference. Again she was informed that the authorities couldn't see their way to — and so on; and *some* people say that the second refusal wound up with: “No ladies, however light, can be accommodated in official Dirigibles.” But it may be only *ben trovato*.

November 4th. Broadlands. — What old-fashioned people call the First Anniversary of my Marriage, and what *I* call my Paper Wedding, has come and gone. The festivities have been the talk of the county, and accounts and pictures have come out in *The Sideglancer*, *The Peeress*, and *West-End Whispers*. The presents simply rolled in — all paper, of course, and the nicest kind too. And to give the finishing touch of success to things, my goodman had to fly off somewhere on business the very morning of the day fixed for the Paper Wedding Dance; so there was no one to put the brake on, and we made things hum and a bit over! We were all dressed in paper — all we womenfolk. My frock was simply a

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dream — all of tissue paper, dancing length, the skirt a mass of the daintiest, teeniest, kilted flounces. Every one was raving about it. Babs looked all right in wall-paper, made Watteau; it had something the effect of old brocade. Wee-Wee, in pink gelatine paper with gold-paper fringe, was exactly like a big bon-bon. We had to let the men down easy. They almost all jibbed at having to dress themselves in paper. Only a few were good. Bosh, in whitey-brown wrapping-paper, was a big success; and Norty, in cream-laid note, made Incroyable, with the *sweetest* paper-lace jabot and wrist ruffles, and a touch of powder in his hair, was quite one of the show figures. Aunt Goldie refused to come, on the plea that it was “too frivolous a way of marking a serious occasion” — which is the longest name for rheumatism I’ve yet heard!

The *pièce de résistance* of the night was my new dance. It’s the thing now for a hostess to invent a dance, copyright it as far as she can, and have it danced only at her own parties. So, of course, Blanche is

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on the premises with a new one. Leo Marston, the musical-comedy man, wrote me the music for it, and it's simply a *screamer* — a blend of valse, rag-two-step, and jiu-jitsu.

Among the crowd I got together for my Paper Wedding Revels, was my last new *protégé*, a wonderfully gifted young Inventor. It's a splendid way of booming oneself, I find, to finance a genius, or an expedition, or anything of that kind. Pamela Middleshire financed an expedition to go to some island somewhere and find some buried treasure, and though, when they got there, they found that not only was there no treasure but not even an *island*, it got her name up and made every one talk about her.

The young genius that I'm going to finance, or get Josiah to do it, has made the most deliciously thrilling invention — something in the Edison way, but ever so much better. He calls it an Ideograph, and when you happen upon a good idea, you've only got to press the ideograph, a little thing like a mariner's compass, against

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your forehead, or wherever the ideas are, and it registers it. It will be an immense boon to writing people, and to public speakers, and Members of Parliament, and, in fact, to *every one* who lives by his wits. It will be a blessing, too, to *nous autres*. I often think of things to say at dinner or supper, and when the time comes to say them, they're gone. In that case, you'd only have to press your ideograph, a pretty gold one done with jewels, to your brow, and your ideas and smart speeches would all come back to you. Malcolm says heaps and heaps of valuable thoughts are lost to the world through people not being able, or being too lazy, to write them down when they occur, and then forgetting them. He looks so earnest and *quite* handsome as he talks of his invention. His eyes are *most* uncommon. I don't know even *now* whether they're grey or hazel, as I said to Norty the other day; and Norty's answer was that they'd both be *black* if I talked much more about them!

A letter from my dear old Daphne, very

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loving, but rather preachy, taking the First Anniversary for her text. What moss-grown sentiments hers are! She evidently throws back to some ancestress who believed in all sorts of things. Poor dear! She's got fearfully left. Not that I'm at all inclined to speak against marriage. Far from it. I consider marriage quite a good idea if there's plenty of money and you don't see much of each other. After a year of it I feel qualified to speak with authority on the subject to those who are still tilting at the ring; and my advice to them is, supposing you have your choice of one you do care for, and one you don't care for, take the one you *don't* care for; he'll *wear* ever so much better; there'll be no shattered-idol business, and the First Anniversary won't find you sweeping up the fragments. And the one you *do* care for may remain nice and interesting for ever and ever. Amen.

How *poky* of Daphne to be going in for Esperanto! There's not a thrill to be got out of it. Though no Esperantist myself, in my quick way I've seized all the points

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of it. You say just what you please, but you end everything with *a* or *j*, and you generally finish by becoming a vegetarian or a fruitarian, and getting rid of your waist and your heels.

XXIII

“NORTY,” M. P.

Blanche's Diary continued.

November 25th. Millchester. — I'd no idea a by-election was such simply screaming fun. I've had the time of my life here this week. When North-East Millchester fell vacant, we all persuaded Norty that he ought not to hide his talents any longer in a bushel of something, especially as the Middleshires have a place close by, and the Vavasour interest is strong there. Like a good boy, he said if we all wished it he didn't mind having a touch at Parliament, so down we came, a lot of us, to see the thing through. It's been a three-cornered contest. In addition to the man on the Wrong Side, a Socialist stood, and Outa Telbows, the Hungarian Socialist Count, has been here making some of his absurd,

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flaming speeches, I see now how fallacious Socialism is. I can't imagine how I could ever think Outa Telbows good-looking. The creature has grown a beard, and is positively frightful. He ought to be exported as an Undesirable. I'm not in the least ashamed of my change of opinions. Norty says I needn't be. He says opinions are like other things — you want to try a lot before you get a set to suit you.

The Wrong Side (I don't notice the Socialist gang, we don't *expect* anything decent from *them*) have behaved in a most *odious* way. Their *posters*, and the *leaflets* they've put about! Kiddy and his Yankee wife came to help, and also Lala Middleshire, and Croppy and Gwendolen; and Aunt Goldie arrived in a very juvenile get-up, to captivate voters; but she caught sight of one of the Wrong Side's great posters — a fearful caricature of herself and Norty, with the words, "A man may not marry his grandmother, *however* much money she has!" and the poor old dear fled back to Devonshire. Norty says only rotters would hit below the belt like

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that. But, of course, we didn't take it lying down. Norty's agent got out some screaming posters about *them*, *en revanche*, and leaflets with lots of little things he'd found out about them. Millchester is full of factories and workpeople. I don't exactly know what it is they make, but the poor things get up awfully early to make it, and work very hard. I went about in my big white Darracq, that I call *Carte Blanche*, dressed in white cloth, with white furs, and made friends with them, and told them what wonderful things Norty would do for them. Poor boy! he's pledged himself to *such* a programme! But, as he says, programmes are only *made* to be altered. And the Wrong Side have certainly gone one better in *their* programme. They promised pensions to all who don't care about work; votes for women, and the best and least draughty seats in the House to be reserved for the female members; the Speaker to be a woman, and to be allowed to *speak*! The suffragists came to some of our meetings, and began to "cut didos," as Mrs. Kiddy

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says; but Norty managed to square them without promising them votes. He's good-looking, and has a way with him, and even a *suffragist* is a woman first, I suppose.

I went about among the people, and got them all on my side. The dear, grimy things simply worshipped me. We gave a great Cake-and-Jam Tea to a lot of the little kiddies, and those wretches on the Wrong Side at once put out leaflets with, "How a *Buy-Election* is managed. Voters of North-East Millchester, beware of Mr. Norton Vavasour (first cousin of that bloated aristocrat, the Duke of Middleshire, the biggest ground-landlord in Millchester); and beware of his Fair Friends and *un-fair* methods! Speak out your honest opinions, electors of North-East Millchester, and don't allow your mouths to be stopped with JAM—with Raspberry JAM—with Strawberry JAM—with *Bribery JAM!*"

Never mind. We've frustrated their politics, confounded their knavish tricks, and got our man in. After the poll was declared, we gave a great kick-up to all

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and sundry. Josiah suddenly appeared on the scene, and seemed a bit sumphish. He congratulated Norty formally, and then asked him if he had "thought seriously of any of the problems of the day — of the Unemployed, for instance?" "Oh, yes," said Norty; "*Naturally* I've thought about *them*, for I'm one of them."

We've great hopes of our new Member. He'll begin in just a small way, asking *questions* about things — the size of policemen's boots, say, or something of that kind. Then he'll begin introducing little private Bills, and will speak whenever he can get or make an opportunity. And if he's *very* cheeky and unmanageable, and asserts himself and advertises himself enough, he may get into the Cabinet when his own side is in, or even before that if he cares to do a quick-change turn.

His views on the everlasting Irish Question he takes from *me*. My latest *Cause* is the Irish. I've put in ten days lately at the Flummerys' place in Galway, and what time I could spare from parties and hunting, I gave up to mastering the Irish Ques-

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tion. And now I speak with *authority* of the Irish. They're *clever*, but they're *queer*, and what they want is not *ruling*, but *managing*. Oh, yes, I've found them out. You can do *anything* with them if you go to work the right way. I'd some lovely talks with the Galway peasants. I told them how *silly* they were to want Home Rule, and to hate their landlords, and to drive cattle away from places. A funny old chap, sucking a little black pipe, said, "Sure, darlint, 'tis yourself knows all about us. If there was more like *ye*, Ireland's troubles would soon be over." (There can be no doubt that, with *all* their queerness, they *do* understand and appreciate one!) I promised I'd send him some tobacco to smoke in his little *gossoon* (it's always a good plan to use their own words, if you know any), and he said, "May the Heavens be your bed, darlint; but 'tis a dhudeen I'm smoking—a gossoon is a little bhoy."

I'm working simply most awfully hard for Ireland just now. I've bought a ghastly heap of poplin (a loathsome material and I shall never have it made up), and a frantic

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lot of Limerick lace (which is rather nice, though its name gives one the shudders *now*); and, let me see — oh, yes, about a ton of horrors in bog-oak. (Between me and myself, I consider there's no greater proof of the unbalanced state of the Irish mind than those fearful things they make out of bog-oak !)

XXIV

TOWN IN WINTER — THE “NEWEST”
WOMAN — SKATING AT THE “ROYAL”
— A “HIGHER” PLAY.

December 11th. Claridge's. — I always think town is comfiest in the before-Christmas season, which is a particularly lively one this year. I've been doing a frantic heap of shopping. When you see a really sweet thing, you're bound to buy it, not only because you want it yourself, but to prevent any one else from having it. Darling Pompom, too, wanted everything new that a little doggie *can* want, from motor-goggles to a manicure-set and sleeping-socks. And Jack, my great South American spider, had to have his gold-wire harness repaired. People are dancing a good deal this week — for charity, of course. If you *do* dance in town at this time

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of year, it's correct to dance *in aid of something*. There was a very cheery affair the other night at the Grafton Galleries for the Horribly Afflicted. I gave a big dinner for it, and so did several others, including the Bullyon-Boundermere woman, who brought on a weird crowd of unknowns; *à propos de quoi* Bosh Tresyllyan tells a little story. For his sins, he was dancing with one of these weird unknowns, and, after starting several topics of chat, and finding nobody at home, he tried the new singer and her wonderful F in alt that every one's been raving about. This was the answer he got: "Oh, I'm ashamed to say I haven't heard her, in *Alt* or any *other* opera!"

The B.-B. woman has quarrelled with *all* her bear-leaders now, and is trying to get along on her own, with woful results. The creature is imitating *me* in a most outrageous way. I hear she's had the "Valse Blanche" danced at one of her horrid let-'em-all-come parties. And as if that were not enough, she's actually using my own, my very own scent — white chrysanthemum, "Blanche Multi-

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mill " brand, distilled for me, the sweetest, faintest, subtlest perfume, associated so *utterly* with me that when people become aware of it they say, " Blanche is, or has been, here." And now I shall never be able to use it again. I think of going to law with her about it. That is a pleasure as yet untasted. What lovely frocks I'd wear in court, and what smart things I'd say! But then, on second thoughts, it would advertise *her* as well as *me*, and that's not to be dreamed of for a moment. No; I'll leave her to fate and the Smythe-Smythe woman.

The latter's sudden leap into social success is distinctly funny, and the B.-B.'s raging jealousy is still funnier. The Smythe-Smythe woman (her husband, I believe, is the moving spirit behind the X Y Z Tea Shops) was taken up originally by old Lady Needmore, but she seemed an utterly impossible person, with the *quaintest* way of speaking, and the *weirdest* manners and customs. One night, however, at dinner at Bosh and Wee-Wee's, where old Needmore had managed to pitchfork her in, the talk turned on appendicitis. Every one was

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a good deal interested, and the Smythe-Smythe woman was quite forgotten, when suddenly she weighed in with a most graphic account of a fearful attack of appendicitis *she'd* had, and how she was operated on by six surgeons at once. The whole table was quite hanging on her words; and since then she's been asked everywhere. Mrs. B.-B. is almost in a frenzy, I hear, and is wildly searching for some new and thrilling disease she can lay claim to; but it's no good, she finds herself down the course, while the appendicitis-woman passes the post an easy winner.

Yesterday afternoon I went to the "Royal" to polish up my skating a bit. Everybody was there, including the Inner Circle of skaters, those wonderful people who have all the club figures at the tips of their toes. Pamela Middleshire is the acknowledged leader among them. She can do all that *is* to be done on skates — the Swedish Swirl, the Russian Rush, the Steeples, the Dippers, the Plungers, and all the rest of it; and not content with this, she has invented a new one, which

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has been added to the club figures, and, out of compliment to Lala Middleshire, christened the Duchess's Diadem. Lord Ninian Ffollyott was another of the virtuosi there yesterday. He was doing the Donkey's Ears to perfection, and followed that up with the difficult Mustard and Cress. Some people are *years* trying to do this last figure, and Lord Ninny told me that, when he found he had really got hold of it, it was the happiest day of his life! Myself couldn't give up the time to become a figure-skater. I'm satisfied with just a little bit of outside edge — in short, with just going well enough to *look* nice, and show off a *chic* skating dress (my new one, of nasturtium velvet, is simply *quite!*).

To-day I went to one of the *matinées* at the Superior Theatre, where they produce the *higher* plays, and you see the *higher* acting. Plot, incident, construction, and a regular ending — in fact all that old-fashioned nonsense — are quite tabooed in the Superior Theatre's plays, and instead you have *atmosphere* and *point of view*.

The play to-day is making a great sen-

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sation; it is a new one by a man who is expected to do immense things. It is called "*Pain*;" there are only two characters, and the whole action passes in a dentist's room. The Woman is waiting to have a tooth out, and in the intervals of writhing (Miss St. Sylvester's writhe is hugely admired, and I hear she's copyrighted it) and rushing up and down in agony, she tells us all about her past, a fairly lurid one. This takes half an hour or so. Then the dentist appears, and in him the Toothache-Woman recognizes the Man who constitutes the chief part of her past.

After the interchange of a few compliments of a reminiscent nature, she proceeds to state the Woman's Case for about three-quarters of an hour. The dentist then takes the floor and gives us the Man's Case for a like period (every one says Hugh Havilland shows such admirable restraint here; though there are *some* carping, jealous creatures who say there's *so much* restraint that they don't quite see where the *acting* comes in!). Both of them, in stating their cases, call a spade by a still

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shorter name. And then a frightful fit of toothache comes on, and the Woman, after doing her copyrighted writhe all over the stage, comes to the conclusion that shame, remorse, heartache, and mental anguish of every kind, all lumped together, are simply nowhere when a full-sized toothache comes along, and she ends by imploring the Man to relieve her agony, and assuring him that it will pretty well cancel any wrong he has done her in the past. She gets into the operating chair, and the curtain falls, leaving us wondering (it's the very *essence* of the *higher* plays to leave one wondering) whether she dies under the anæsthetic that's being administered, or whether she gets through it all right, and goes away *with* her past and *without* her tooth. Altogether "Pain" is a lovely play, and every one applauded it immensely. I'm going to have the author presented to me.

XXV

THE MISSING LETTER RECOVERED — THE NEOPHYTE'S BARGAIN — AN INCIPIENT CONSCIENCE?

December 12th. — Just as I was thinking of going out this morning to make a final raid on the shops before leaving town to-morrow, a card was brought me — “Miss Amy Robinson would be glad to see Mrs. Multimill for a few minutes.” “Wonder of wonders!” I said to myself. “This is the lucky girl who’s got the Frothingly millions, *vice* our poor Rollo and Mabel — the new, young millionairess that I’ve been wanting to see.” I said I would see her, and presently a slight little figure was shown into the room. “Still in black!” I thought. “What’s old Lacksiller thinking of? *No one* mourns longer than three months for an uncle now; but this is an

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exceptional case, certainly — perhaps she does it out of gratitude.” I saw at once it was a Dupont frock. He is, of course, the *only* man for mourning. He can make it pathetic and becoming without being too sombre; and in cases like this, where the mourning is the outward and visible sign of a fortune, he puts a very subtle sub-note into the toilette, which means, “The cloud has a golden lining.”

The December day being a bit gloomy, I couldn't very well see what my visitor was like till she advanced towards the windows, and then, in the new, young millionairess, I saw — *what?* — the little person of 15 Twilight Grove, Shady Hamlet! Rollo's Entanglement!

The electric was suddenly switched on those enigmatic words of his months ago; that there was a “worse, more perverse, more spitefully fatal feature in the catastrophe than any but himself and one other person knew of.”

Truly, as far as poor Rollo is concerned, Fate, or Providence, or the two together, I should think, have rubbed it in pretty

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deep. Talk of life's ironies! Here was, indeed, a champion one face to face with me. The obscure little school teacher, who was silly enough to run away with Prince Charming before securing her wedding-ring; Rollo's Entanglement, that he had tired of and was anxious to shake off for fear she should spoil his chances with the heiress, is the owner of all for which he sold himself into bondage, and not only that, but the owner of it *because* he so sold himself. Poor, poor unlucky boy!

And the Prince's letter, too! My thoughts flew to that. Where was it? Had she ever had it?

With all these things waltzing round in my head, I greeted my visitor with no apparent recognition. She seemed a good bit agitated, though she tried hard to be cool and calm, and I could see she was putting in practice some of the old-fashioned nonsense old Lacksiller is teaching her.

"I have wanted to speak to you for many months, Mrs. Multimill," she said, when we had sat down; "but had to wait till I was stronger. And I must apologize

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for calling at this hour; I particularly wished to see you alone, or I should not have committed such a solecism."

I didn't feel like having the Lacksiller instructions played off on me, so I said, "Oh, never mind about that. I'm very pleased to see you, Miss Robinson."

She moved to a seat near mine. "How well you do it!" she said, sinking her voice to a whisper. "No one would dream you had ever seen me before. I'm afraid, however hard I try, I shall never be quite like that." She paused a moment, and then went on, whisperingly: "I want to apologize to you for the things I said — that day. I knew afterwards that you did not deserve them. Mrs. Multimill, we both have something in the past that we wish to conceal. I have come here to make a bargain with you." Out of her little black satin wrist-bag she drew a black and silver card-case; from that she took Prince Galoshkin's letter, and handed it to me.

"You *had* got it then?" I said, as I took it.

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“ Yes; I found it after you were gone — that day. I was pretty certain a great lady like you wouldn’t take so much trouble just over some flowers painted by a friend, even though the friend was another great lady. For a long time I meant to use it as a means of revenge, because you were — his sister — and because — but I have put all that behind me now. I know nothing of what it contains. Though you despised me and looked down on me, and do still very likely, I had too much sense of honour to read your letter, even though it was open, and I had no cause to love you, and suspected the contents were very — were rather — in short, were dangerous. And now I have given you your letter, Mrs. Multimill, you can guess what is the bargain I have come to make. I am trying to bury the past deep, deep in a grave that shall never be discovered ” (a touch of the romantic little person of Shady Hamlet here, heroine of a Farthing Fearful) — “ I ask that you also will forget what you know of my past. You are the only lady — the only woman ”

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— she hastily corrected herself — “ in the World that is now my World who knows of that past. I ask you to bury it as I have buried it. If it should ever be my lot to occupy a high position ” (old Lack-siller is evidently already trying to secure her for the young earl) “ and I — I — that is, no one must have any suspicion that ” — her voice died away. I felt inclined to say, “ Oh, you silly little person! You don’t know much of the world you’re being pitchforked into, or you’d be aware that, with two million to your name, you might treat yourself to a *past*, or any *other* little thing you fancied, with impunity.” What I *did* say was, “ Your secret is quite safe with me, Miss Robinson.” And I held out my hand. I think she *must* have bungled her instructions there. I can’t believe that even old *Lacksiller* taught her to shake in that *ricky* manner! “ Thank you, thank you,” she said gratefully.

We parted then, she trying hard to remember exactly the right thing to do and say, and I longing to rush away and burn that letter that’s been so long on my

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mind. And now I've burned it! My sky is cleared of that cloud as big as a man's hand, as Shakespeare says; and it was *literally* so in my case, only that the poor, dear Prince wrote a bigger hand than most men. I've often remarked that one only becomes aware of how deep or how strong *some* feelings are when the electric is switched on them by some *other* feelings. I didn't quite realize how anxious I'd been to get possession of poor Galoshkin's letter, and how I'd hated the idea of Josiah finding out that I'd played it rather low down last year at Irgendeinbad, till the relief I felt after reducing the letter to ashes proved it to me.

My spirits ran so high that I brought up sharp, and said to myself, "What does this mean? Can it be by any chance that, during a year of married life, I've grown to value Josiah's good opinion? — that, though I'm determined to have my liberty, without troubling much about his disapproval of things, I should be sorry after all to have him think really ill of me?" Oh, it's *too* absurd! It really is, you know.



A COMEDY OF MAMMON

What would Babs and Beryl Clarges say?
“Why,” they’d say, “you’ll be growing
that funny, old, Early-Victorian appendage,
a *Conscience*, next!”

THE END.











